

Source: Burke O'Neil LLC

**Blackwater USA Sued for Firing on Iraqi Civilians,
According to Legal Team for Injured Survivor and Families of Three Killed**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 11 /PRNewswire/USNewswire/ -- Blackwater USA, the private military contractor whose heavily armed personnel allegedly opened fire on innocent Iraqi civilians in Nisoor Square in Baghdad on Sept. 16, was sued today by an injured survivor and three families of men killed in the incident, according to the legal team representing the civilians.

Filed in Washington, D.C. federal court by Talib Mutlaq Deewan and the estates of the deceased men – Himoud Saed Atban, Usama Fadhil Abbass, and Oday Ismail Ibraheem – the lawsuit alleges that Blackwater and its affiliated companies violated U.S. law and “created and fostered a culture of lawlessness amongst its employees, encouraging them to act in the company’s financial interests at the expense of innocent human life.”

The Complaint alleges that Blackwater violated the federal Alien Tort Statute in committing extrajudicial killing and war crimes, and that Blackwater should be liable for claims of assault and battery, wrongful death, intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress, and negligent hiring, training and supervision.

Mr. Deewan and the estates of the dead men are represented by Susan L. Burke, William T. O'Neil, Elizabeth M. Burke, and Katherine R. Hawkins of Burke O'Neil LLC, of Philadelphia; Michael A. Ratner and Vincent Warren, of the Center for Constitutional Rights, of New York; and Shereef Hadi Akeel, of Akeel & Valentine, P.C., of Birmingham, Mich.

The defendants include Blackwater USA, Blackwater Security Consulting LLC, The Prince Group LLC, a holding company, and Blackwater founder Erik Prince.

Susan L. Burke, of Burke O'Neil LLC, stated, “This senseless slaughter was only the latest incident in a lengthy pattern of egregious misconduct by Blackwater in Iraq. At the moment of this incident, the Blackwater personnel responsible for the shooting were not protecting State Department officials. We allege that Blackwater personnel were not provoked, and that they had no legitimate reason to fire on civilians. We look forward to forcing Blackwater and Mr. Prince to tell the world under oath why this attack happened, particularly since a Blackwater guard tried to stop his colleagues from indiscriminately firing.”

Michael A. Ratner, of the Center for Constitutional Rights, stated, “Blackwater’s repeated and consistent failure to act in accord with the law of war, U.S. law, and international law harms our nation and it harms Iraq. For the good of both nations, as well as for countless innocent civilians, the company cannot be allowed to continue operating extra-legally, providing mercenaries who flout all kinds of law. This lawsuit, like the ongoing U.S. and Iraqi government investigations, cannot bring back those killed at Nisoor Square but it can make Blackwater accountable for its actions.”

Shereef Hadi Akeel, of Akeel & Valentine, P.C., stated, “Mr. Deewan and the families of the men killed deserve to know the truth about what happened at Nisoor Square, and they deserve justice. Incidents like this one and the many others that have made their way into government reports and news accounts must end. To let the extreme and outrageous conduct alleged in this lawsuit continue only diminishes the work of the Iraqi people and the many honorable men and women in uniform who have paid such a high price in their efforts to stabilize Iraq.”

The lawsuit seeks compensatory damages for death, physical, mental, and economic injuries, and punitive damages.

The case is “Estate of Himoud Saed Atban, et al. v. Blackwater USA, et al.” (C.A. No. 07-1831) in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

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