

# Afghan Government Rejects Blackwater Plan to Outsource War

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*The Afghan government has outlawed and denounced as 'destructive and divisive' a proposal by the founder of private military contractor Blackwater, to privatize the 17-year-old war in the Asian country.*

Erik Prince promoted his proposal on Kabul last week for the government to allow foreign contractors to support Afghan forces in the fight against the Taliban, claiming it could end the war in "six months."

"In no manner does the government of Afghanistan condone this destructive and divisive debate," a statement from the Afghan Office of the National Security Council (NSC) said on Thursday.

The statement said the Afghan government and people would never "allow the counter-terrorism fight to become a private, for-profit business."

It further said that the addition of "new foreign and unaccountable elements" would undermine the right to self-determination of the Afghan people.

"Afghan security and defense forces, under the framework of all applicable laws of the country, have the primary responsibility and authority for safeguarding the noble values of Islam, our national sovereignty, and the independence and territorial integrity of our beloved country and people," the statement read.

Blackwater founder's idea, which first surfaced last year during US President Donald Trump's review of the Afghanistan strategy, has already raised ethical and security concerns among US military officials as well as key lawmakers in Congress and members of Trump's national security team.

In August, US Defense Secretary James Mattis rejected the plan saying the move was not a "wise idea".

However, the frustration of the US war in Afghanistan and the US president's purported unhappiness about the 17-year-long battle is raising fears that he might finally agree with the plan.

Trump's advisers are worried his unhappiness about the Afghanistan conflict would cause

him to seriously consider proposals like Prince's or abruptly order a complete US withdrawal, officials said.

On Tuesday, US-based Human Rights Watch warned against US efforts to outsource the war arguing that the move could endanger civilian lives.

"Prince's company, Academi, formerly known as Blackwater, has been implicated in serious crimes in Iraq," said HRW.

The employees of the notorious private military company had been charged with killing 14 Iraqi civilians and wounding 18 others using gunfire and grenades at a busy Baghdad intersection on September 16, 2007. An FBI agent once described the atrocity as the "My Lai massacre of Iraq."

The United States now has about 16,000 troops based in Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan is the longest in US history with a cost of about \$1 trillion. More than 2,400 Americans have died and another 20,000 have been wounded in the country since the invasion in 2001.

Afghanistan is still suffering from insecurity and violence years after the US and its allies invaded the country as part of Washington's so-called war on terror. The military invasion removed the Taliban from power, but their militancy continues to this day.

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