

## Blackwater-linked firm to train Canadian troops

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By Allan Woods | OTTAWA-Canadian soldiers could get training from a U.S. company closely linked to Blackwater USA, a private security firm implicated in the killings of hundreds of Iraqi civilians, if the Department of National Defence has its way.

The military gave notice this week of its intention to award an \$850,000 contract for advanced counterinsurgency training to the Terrorism Research Center, a Virginia-based firm that specializes in terrorism training for military and law enforcement officials. The contract is for one year with the option for a two-year extension.

The counterinsurgency school, which boasts close links to the U.S. government, is listed as a branch of Total Intelligence Solutions, a company that is run by former director of CIA counterterrorism Cofer Black and Erik Prince, a former U.S. Navy Seal.

Both are top executives with the Prince Group, the chief holding company for Total Intelligence Solutions and Blackwater.

"It will shock many Canadians to think of our soldiers, who are amongst the best trained in the world, to be sent down to the U.S. to work with a private war-making company that has been indicted in some of its operations in Iraq in the past," said NDP defence critic Dawn Black. "It raises a terrible spectre."

A spokesperson for Defence Minister Peter MacKay did not respond to requests for comment.

The defence department's training requirements include insurgent tactics, surveillance and intelligence gathering, weapons, financing and propaganda.

The Canadian Forces first identified the need for more robust counterinsurgency training last September, around the same time that Blackwater security forces in Baghdad were implicated in the killing of 17 Iraqis while carrying out a contract with the U.S. State Department to protect government officials.

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