

CIA Ends Top Defence Firm's Contract

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WASHINGTON: The Central Intelligence Agency has terminated a contract with the security company formerly called Blackwater Worldwide that allowed the company to load bombs on CIA drones in Pakistan and Afghanistan, intelligence officials said.

The contract gave employees with the company an operational role in one of the CIA's most significant covert programs, which has killed dozens of militants with Predator and Reaper drones. The company's involvement highlighted the extent to which the CIA had outsourced critical jobs to private companies since the 9/11 attacks.

The contract with the company, now called Xe Services, was canceled this year by Leon Panetta, the CIA director, according to a spokesman of the US agency. In August, the New York Times first revealed the existence of the contract, which was run by a division of the company called Blackwater Select, which handles classified contracts.

George Little, the CIA spokesman, said that Panetta had ordered that the agency's employees take over the jobs from Xe employees at the remote drone bases in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and that Panetta had also ordered a review of all contracts with the company. "At this time, Blackwater is not involved in any CIA operations other than in a security or support role," Little said.

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