

By Jeremy Scahill

From [The Nation](#) | Original Article

A former Blackwater employee and an ex-US Marine who has worked as a security operative for the company have made a series of explosive allegations in sworn statements filed on August 3 in federal court in Virginia. The two men claim that the company's owner, Erik Prince, may have murdered or facilitated the murder of individuals who were cooperating with federal authorities investigating the company. The former employee also alleges that Prince "views himself as a Christian crusader tasked with eliminating Muslims and the Islamic faith from the globe," and that Prince's companies "encouraged and rewarded the destruction of Iraqi life."

In their testimony, both men also allege that Blackwater was smuggling weapons into Iraq. One of the men alleges that Prince turned a profit by transporting "illegal" or "unlawful" weapons into the country on Prince's private planes. They also charge that Prince and other Blackwater executives destroyed incriminating videos, emails and other documents and have intentionally deceived the US State Department and other federal agencies. The identities of the two individuals were sealed out of concerns for their safety.

These allegations, and a series of other charges, are contained in sworn affidavits, given under penalty of perjury, filed late at night on August 3 in the Eastern District of Virginia as part of a seventy-page motion by lawyers for Iraqi civilians suing Blackwater for alleged war crimes and other misconduct. Susan Burke, a private attorney working in conjunction with the Center for Constitutional Rights, is suing Blackwater in five separate civil cases filed in the Washington, DC, area. They were recently consolidated before Judge T.S. Ellis III of the Eastern District of Virginia for pretrial motions. Burke filed the August 3 motion in response to Blackwater's motion to dismiss the case. Blackwater asserts that Prince and the company are innocent of any wrongdoing and that they were professionally performing their duties on behalf of their employer, the US State Department.

The former employee, identified in the court documents as "John Doe #2," is a former member of Blackwater's management team, according to a source close to the case. Doe #2 [alleges in a sworn declaration](#) that, based on information provided to him by former colleagues, "it appears that Mr. Prince and his employees murdered, or had murdered, one or more persons who have provided information, or who were planning to provide information, to the federal authorities about the ongoing criminal conduct." John Doe #2 says he worked at Blackwater for four years; his identity is concealed in the sworn declaration because he "fear[s] violence against me in retaliation for submitting this Declaration." He also alleges, "On several occasions after my departure from Mr. Prince's employ, Mr. Prince's management has personally threatened me with death and violence."

[In a separate sworn statement](#), the former US marine who worked for Blackwater in Iraq alleges that he has "learned from my Blackwater colleagues and former colleagues that one or more persons who have provided information, or who were planning to provide information about Erik Prince and Blackwater have been killed in suspicious circumstances." Identified as "John Doe #1," he says he "joined Blackwater and deployed to Iraq to guard State Department and other American government personnel." It is not clear if Doe #1 is still working with the company as he states he is "scheduled to deploy in the immediate future to Iraq." Like Doe #2, he states that he fears "violence" against him for "submitting this Declaration." No further details on the alleged murder(s) are provided.

"Mr. Prince feared, and continues to fear, that the federal authorities will detect and prosecute his various criminal deeds," states Doe #2. "On more than one occasion, Mr. Prince and his top managers gave orders to destroy emails and other documents. Many incriminating videotapes, documents and emails have been shredded and destroyed."

*The Nation* cannot independently verify the identities of the two individuals, their roles at Blackwater or what motivated them to provide sworn testimony in these civil cases. Both individuals state that they have previously cooperated with federal prosecutors conducting a criminal inquiry into Blackwater.

"It's a pending investigation, so we cannot comment on any matters in front of a Grand Jury or if a Grand Jury even exists on these matters," John Roth, the spokesperson for the US Attorney's office in the District of Columbia, told *The Nation*. "It would be a crime if we did that." Asked specifically about whether there is a criminal investigation into Prince regarding the murder allegations and other charges, Roth said: "We would not be able to comment on what we are or are not doing in regards to any possible investigation involving an uncharged individual."

*The Nation* repeatedly attempted to contact spokespeople for Prince or his companies at numerous email addresses and telephone numbers. When a company representative was reached by phone and asked to comment, she said, "Unfortunately no one can help you in that area." The representative then said that she would pass along *The Nation's* request. As this article goes to press, no company representative has responded further to *The Nation*

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Doe #2 states in the declaration that he has also provided the information contained in his statement "in grand jury proceedings convened by the United States Department of Justice." Federal prosecutors convened a grand jury in the aftermath of the September 16, 2007, Nisour Square shootings in Baghdad, which left seventeen Iraqis dead. Five Blackwater employees are awaiting trial on several manslaughter charges and a sixth, Jeremy Ridgeway, has already pleaded guilty to manslaughter and attempting to commit manslaughter and is cooperating with prosecutors. It is not clear whether Doe #2 testified in front of the Nisour Square grand jury or in front of a separate grand jury.

The two declarations are each five pages long and contain a series of devastating allegations concerning Erik Prince and his network of companies, which now operate under the banner of Xe Services LLC. Among those leveled by Doe #2 is that Prince "views himself as a Christian crusader tasked with eliminating Muslims and the Islamic faith from the globe":

To that end, Mr. Prince intentionally deployed to Iraq certain men who shared his vision of Christian supremacy, knowing and wanting these men to take every available opportunity to murder Iraqis. Many of these men used call signs based on the Knights of the Templar, the warriors who fought the Crusades.

Mr. Prince operated his companies in a manner that encouraged and rewarded the destruction of Iraqi life. For example, Mr. Prince's executives would openly speak about going over to Iraq to "lay Hajiis out on cardboard." Going to Iraq to shoot and kill Iraqis was viewed as a sport or game. Mr. Prince's employees openly and consistently used racist and derogatory terms for Iraqis and other Arabs, such as "ragheads" or "hajiis."

Among the additional allegations made by Doe #1 is that "Blackwater was smuggling weapons into Iraq." He states that he personally witnessed weapons being "pulled out" from dog food bags. Doe #2 alleges that "Prince and his employees arranged for the weapons to be polywrapped and smuggled into Iraq on Mr. Prince's private planes, which operated under the name Presidential Airlines," adding that Prince "generated substantial revenues from participating in the illegal arms trade."

Doe #2 states: "Using his various companies, [Prince] procured and distributed various weapons, including unlawful weapons such as sawed off semi-automatic machine guns with silencers, through unlawful channels of distribution." Blackwater "was not abiding by the terms of the contract with the State Department and was deceiving the State Department," according to Doe #1.

This is not the first time an allegation has surfaced that Blackwater used dog food bags to smuggle weapons into Iraq. [ABC News's Brian Ross reported](#) in November 2008 that a "federal grand jury in North Carolina is investigating allegations the controversial private security firm Blackwater illegally shipped assault weapons and silencers to Iraq, hidden in large sacks of dog food." Another former Blackwater employee has also confirmed this information to *The Nation*.

Both individuals allege that Prince and Blackwater deployed individuals to Iraq who, in the words of Doe #1, "were not properly vetted and cleared by the State Department." Doe #2 adds that "Prince ignored the advice and pleas from certain employees, who sought to stop the unnecessary killing of innocent Iraqis." Doe #2 further states that some Blackwater officials

overseas refused to deploy "unfit men" and sent them back to the US. Among the reasons cited by Doe #2 were "the men making statements about wanting to deploy to Iraq to 'kill ragheads' or achieve 'kills' or 'body counts,'" as well as "excessive drinking" and "steroid use." However, when the men returned to the US, according to Doe #2, "Prince and his executives would send them back to be deployed in Iraq with an express instruction to the concerned employees located overseas that they needed to 'stop costing the company money.'"

Doe #2 also says Prince "repeatedly ignored the assessments done by mental health professionals, and instead terminated those mental health professionals who were not willing to endorse deployments of unfit men." He says Prince and then-company president Gary Jackson "hid from Department of State the fact that they were deploying men to Iraq over the objections of mental health professionals and security professionals in the field," saying they "knew the men being deployed were not suitable candidates for carrying lethal weaponry, but did not care because deployments meant more money."

Doe #1 states that "Blackwater knew that certain of its personnel intentionally used excessive and unjustified deadly force, and in some instances used unauthorized weapons, to kill or seriously injure innocent Iraqi civilians." He concludes, "Blackwater did nothing to stop this misconduct." Doe #1 states that he "personally observed multiple incidents of Blackwater personnel intentionally using unnecessary, excessive and unjustified deadly force." He then cites several specific examples of Blackwater personnel firing at civilians, killing or "seriously" wounding them, and then failing to report the incidents to the State Department.

Doe #1 also alleges that "all of these incidents of excessive force were initially videotaped and voice recorded," but that "Immediately after the day concluded, we would watch the video in a session called a 'hot wash.' Immediately after the hotwashing, the video was erased to prevent anyone other than Blackwater personnel seeing what had actually occurred." Blackwater, he says, "did not provide the video to the State Department."

Doe #2 expands on the issue of unconventional weapons, alleging Prince "made available to his employees in Iraq various weapons not authorized by the United States contracting authorities, such as hand grenades and hand grenade launchers. Mr. Prince's employees repeatedly used this illegal weaponry in Iraq, unnecessarily killing scores of innocent Iraqis." Specifically, he alleges that Prince "obtained illegal ammunition from an American company called LeMas. This company sold ammunition designed to explode after penetrating within the human body. Mr. Prince's employees repeatedly used this illegal ammunition in Iraq to inflict maximum damage on Iraqis."

Blackwater has gone through an intricate rebranding process in the twelve years it has been in business, changing its name and logo several times. Prince also has created more than a dozen affiliate companies, some of which are registered offshore and whose operations are shrouded in secrecy. According to Doe #2, "Prince created and operated this web of companies in order to obscure wrongdoing, fraud and other crimes."

"For example, Mr. Prince transferred funds from one company (Blackwater) to another (Greystone) whenever necessary to avoid detection of his money laundering and tax evasion schemes." He added: "Mr. Prince contributed his personal wealth to fund the operations of the Prince companies whenever he deemed such funding necessary. Likewise, Mr. Prince took funds out of the Prince companies and placed the funds in his personal accounts at will."

Briefed on the substance of these allegations by *The Nation*, Congressman Dennis Kucinich replied, "If these allegations are true, Blackwater has been a criminal enterprise defrauding taxpayers and murdering innocent civilians." Kucinich is on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and has been investigating Prince and Blackwater since 2004.

"Blackwater is a law unto itself, both internationally and domestically. The question is why they operated with impunity. In addition to Blackwater, we should be questioning their patrons in the previous administration who funded and employed this organization. Blackwater wouldn't exist without federal patronage; these allegations should be thoroughly investigated," Kucinich said.

A hearing before Judge Ellis in the civil cases against Blackwater is scheduled for August 7.

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