

Wheeled Warriors: Explaining Blackwater's Unparalleled Record of Violence in Iraq

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On September 16, 2007, employees of Blackwater, a private security company tasked with protecting U.S. State Department personnel in Iraq, opened fire on pedestrians and motorists in Baghdad's bustling Nisour Square. This brief but ferocious use of violence against unarmed Iraqi civilians, which came to be known as the "Nisour Square incident," left 17 civilians dead and two dozen wounded.¹ This event was one of the most violent and widely reported on incidents involving Blackwater's personnel, but it was emblematic of their unparalleled record of violent actions during the Iraq War. In fact, the firm's personnel fired their weapons during at least 323 incidents in Iraq between January 1, 2005, and December 31, 2007, for an average of two shooting incidents per week. Moreover, despite operating during the same period, performing the same tasks, for the same clients, and facing the same threats in the same general environment, Blackwater's personnel killed and seriously injured far more people than their counterparts in DynCorp, one of the other major private security companies that provided protective services for the U.S. State Department during this period of the Iraq War. Stunningly, while Blackwater's personnel inflicted at least 62 deaths and 86 serious injuries during this

¹ Blackwater changed its name to Xe in 2009 and to Academi in 2011. However, since the firm is almost invariably referred to by its original name, this study will, whenever possible, do the same. James Jay Carafano, *Private Sector, Public Wars: Contractors in Combat - Afghanistan, Iraq, and Future Conflicts* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 107; Molly Dunigan, *Victory for Hire: Private Security Companies' Impact on Military Effectiveness* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies, 2011), 71-72; Steve Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules: America's Mercenaries Fighting in Iraq* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2008), 88; Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2008), 8; Suzanne Simons, *Master of War: Blackwater USA's Erik Prince and the Business of War* (New York, NY: Harper, 2009), 176 and 262.

period, their counterparts in DynCorp killed only 11 people and caused only one serious injury. Furthermore, despite constituting one of the most widely discussed, condemned, and glorified topics in the literature on contemporary private security companies, Blackwater's actions in Iraq have never been satisfactorily explained, until now.²

TABLE 1 Casualties Inflicted by Blackwater and DynCorp during 2005-2007 Period

| | Deaths* | Serious Injuries* |
|------------|---------|-------------------|
| Blackwater | 62 | 86 |
| DynCorp | 11 | 1 |

* Precise numbers are available for 54 of the deaths and 74 of the serious injuries inflicted by Blackwater's personnel. However, the firm also inflicted an unknown number of deaths during 8 incidents and an unknown number of serious injuries during 12 incidents. This table is based on the assumption that Blackwater's personnel killed or seriously injured at least one person during these incidents.

Why did Blackwater's personnel inflict a much greater number of deaths and serious injuries during their security operations than their counterparts in DynCorp? By undertaking the most comprehensive analysis ever attempted of Blackwater's use of violence, and by developing a coherent theoretical explanation for the firm's tactical behaviour, this paper offers a credible and well-supported answer to this question: Blackwater's personnel killed and seriously injured an unparalleled number of people in Iraq because the firm maintained a military culture that placed strong emphasis on norms encouraging its personnel to exercise personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security, which, together, motivated its personnel to use tremendous violence against anyone they suspected of posing a threat. Specifically, the firm's military culture motivated its personnel to fire upon suspected threats more quickly, at greater distances, and with a greater quantity of bullets and to more readily abandon the people they shot at when compared to DynCorp's personnel, who did not strongly emphasize any of these norms. These actions, in turn, led to the death or serious injury of a majority of the firm's victims of Iraq.

² See, for example, the extensive discussion of this topic in Carafano, *Private Sector, Public Wars*; Dunigan, *Victory for Hire*; Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*; Simons, *Master of War*.

This study is the first to utilize data contained in the Private Security Company Violent Incident Dataset (PSCVID), which was developed by the author in 2012. The PSCVID drew information from a wide range of sources, including over four thousand pages of incident reports produced by the U.S. State Department and private security companies involved in violent incidents during the Iraq War, news media accounts, scholarly books and articles, and reports produced by governments, research institutes, and non-governmental organizations. The incident reports proved particularly enlightening because they contained information on the actual tactical behaviour exhibited by the private security personnel who took part in violent incidents in Iraq. As this study illustrates, this tactical-level information is vital for explaining why Blackwater's personnel inflicted considerably more harm than their counterparts in DynCorp.

Focusing on military culture to explain Blackwater's behaviour is not entirely novel. In fact, cultural theories of military behaviour have become increasingly popular over the past two decades. Notable examples include Jeffrey Legro's *Cooperation Under Fire*, which argued that the cultures maintained by different military forces will lead them to employ major weapons systems or strategies and decline to use others, even when they are likely to prove useful; Kenneth Pollack's "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness," which argued that a range of cultural traits commonly observed in Arab military forces were responsible for the frequent defeats suffered by these forces since the end of the Second World War; and Scott Fitzsimmons' *Mercenaries in Asymmetric Conflicts*, which argued that the military culture's maintained by mercenary forces and their opponents in a number of African civil wars drove their tactical behaviour, which, in turn, largely determined which side won each conflict.³ However, few, if any, existing studies have put forward a cultural theory that can

³ Scott Fitzsimmons, *Mercenaries in Asymmetric Conflicts* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell

explain why an armed force employed significantly more violence than other armed forces operating during the same period, performing the same tasks, and facing the same threats in the same general environment.

Moreover, a few commentators have made passing references to the possibility that Blackwater maintained a unique and influential military culture. For example, a 2008 report prepared by Human Rights First suggested that Blackwater maintained a “culture of impunity” that encouraged its personnel to, “shoot-first (and) ask questions later - or never.”⁴ A brief filed by attorneys acting on behalf of some of the victims of the Nisour Square incident, similarly, suggested that, “Blackwater 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.”⁵ Likewise, during a 2007 hearing before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Representative Thomas M. Davis suggested that Blackwater’s controversial behaviour in Iraq was, “the product of a dangerous cowboy culture.”⁶ Finally, discussing the subject in somewhat theatrical terms, Shawn Engbrecht argued that,

the group mind-set... (prevalent within Blackwater) allowed intelligent, law-abiding young American men to become killers in the same way that the SS inducted sharp, outstanding Germans under the Nazi reign. These Germans, similar to the Americans in Iraq, would have balked at any thought of transgressing the law except the all-powerful atmosphere at the time not only permitted it but also encouraged it.⁷

University Press, 1995); Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness" (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996).

⁴ Human Rights First, "Private Security Contractors at War: Ending the Culture of Impunity," (New York, NY: Human Rights First, 2008), 3.

⁵ Susan L. Burke et al., "Second Amended Complaint in *Abtan v. Blackwater*," (Washington, DC: The United States District Court for the District of Columbia, March 28, 2008), 3.

⁶ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," (Washington, DC: House of Representatives, The Congress of the United States, October 2, 2007), 14.

⁷ Shawn Engbrecht, *America's Covert Warriors: Inside the World of Private Military Contractors* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011), 16.

Nevertheless, this paper represents the first attempt to develop a coherent theoretical explanation that can illuminate precisely how Blackwater's military culture influenced the behaviour of its personnel.

The remainder of this paper will proceed in five parts. First, it will discuss alternative explanations for Blackwater's record of violence in Iraq. Second, it will introduce the ideational theory of tactical violence, which offers predictions regarding how private security companies, such as Blackwater, that place strong emphasis on certain cultural norms encourage their personnel to use tremendous violence during their security operations. Third, it will discuss relevant aspects of Blackwater's military culture. Fourth, it will test the predictions made by the ideational theory of tactical violence against the actual tactical behaviour of Blackwater's personnel during the Iraq War. Finally, it will conclude with a discussion of implications for the use of private security companies in contemporary conflicts.

Alternative Explanations for Blackwater's Record of Violence in Iraq

A number of alternative explanations have been put forward to try to account for the high body count produced by Blackwater's personnel in Iraq. The firm's founder and former chairman and CEO, Eric Prince, has argued that his personnel killed and seriously injured more people than their counterparts in other firms because they were attacked far more often than any other private security personnel and were, consequently, *forced* to fire at and harm a much greater number of deadly threats.⁸ Prince conveyed his views during a hearing before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in October 2007, where he told the assembled

⁸ T. Christian Miller, *Blood Money: Wasted Billions, Lost Lives, and Corporate Greed in Iraq* (New York, NY: Little Brown and Company, 2006), 75 and 165.

members of Congress that much of the harm inflicted by his personnel was unavoidable because they were attacked almost every day and simply had to defend themselves:

We don't even record all the times that our guys receive fire. The vehicles get shot at on a daily basis, multiple times a day.... An incident occurs typically when our men fear for their life. They are not able to extract themselves from the situation. They have to use sufficient defensive fire to off the X, to get off that place where the bad guys have tried to kill Americans that day.⁹

In written testimony presented to the committee, Prince further argued that:

The areas of Iraq in which we operate are particularly dangerous and challenging. Blackwater personnel are subject to regular attacks by terrorists and other nefarious forces within Iraq. We are the targets of the same ruthless enemies that have killed more than 3,800 American military personnel and thousands of innocent Iraqis.¹⁰

This explanation is certainly reasonable, given that Blackwater's personnel were involved in a far greater number of violent incidents than their counterparts in DynCorp during the 2005-2007 period of the Iraq War. Moreover, Blackwater's personnel were physically attacked by insurgents during some of these incidents and it is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that, at least at times, they needed to use force to neutralize or drive off an armed, unambiguous deadly threat to themselves and their clients. However, it is important to point out that Blackwater's personnel reported firing their weapons *preemptively* in 88 percent of the incidents where they fired at all. In other words, Blackwater's personnel almost always fired their weapons in situations where they had not been fired upon or otherwise attacked by a suspected threat. In addition, according to Blackwater's incident reports, the firm's personnel did not fire their weapons during a

⁹ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 54.

¹⁰ Erik D. Prince, "Statement of Erik D. Prince to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform," (Washington, DC: The Congress of the United States, October 2, 2007), 2.

significant minority (43 percent) of the incidents where they were attacked by insurgents. In contrast, the firm’s personnel claim to have fired their weapons during 96 percent of the violent incidents where they encountered unarmed civilians.

TABLE 2 Civilian and Insurgent Casualties Inflicted by Blackwater and DynCorp during 2005-2007 Period

| | Civilian Deaths | Insurgent Deaths* | Serious Civilian Injuries | Serious Insurgent Injuries* |
|------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Blackwater | 34 | 28 | 46 | 39 |
| DynCorp | 3 | 8 | 1 | 0 |

* Precise numbers are available for 20 of the insurgent deaths and 27 of the serious insurgent injuries inflicted by Blackwater’s personnel. However, the firm also inflicted an unknown number of insurgent deaths during 8 incidents and an unknown number of serious insurgent injuries during 12 incidents. This table is based on the assumption that Blackwater’s personnel killed or seriously injured at least one insurgent during these incidents.

Moreover, of the 54 deaths inflicted by Blackwater’s personnel during the 2005-2007 period for which precise figures are known, a majority (34) were unarmed civilians. In contrast, less than one third (three) of the 11 people killed by DynCorp’s employees during this same period were civilians. Likewise, of the 74 serious injuries inflicted by Blackwater’s personnel during this period for which precise figures are known, a majority (46) were civilians. In contrast, DynCorp’s employees seriously injured only one unarmed civilian during this period. Taken together, these data suggest that Blackwater’s employees not only inflicted far more harm during the Iraq War than their counterparts in DynCorp, but also that they inflicted most of this harm upon innocent victims who posed little or no threat to the firm or its clients. In other words, and in contrast to the behaviour of DynCorp’s employees, Blackwater’s personnel chose to inflict a great deal of unnecessary harm during their security operations in Iraq.

Other commentators have argued that Blackwater’s personnel inflicted an unparalleled number of deaths and serious injuries during the Iraq War because the firm’s personnel were undisciplined and granted too much autonomy over how they would conduct their security operations. In other words, these alternative explanations suggest that the firm’s security teams

caused unmatched harm because they did whatever they wanted and operated without any external control. One of the proponents of this view, Steve Fainaru, has argued that the U.S. State Department allowed the firm's personnel, "to do whatever (they)... pleased," during their security operations.¹¹ Moreover, commentators ranging from Fainaru and Jeremy Scahill to the U.S. Congress have argued that the December 24, 2006, shooting of one of the Iraqi Vice President's bodyguards by an intoxicated off duty Blackwater employee as well as the firm's personnel records, which note that the firm fired numerous employees for such offenses as, "Drug and Alcohol Violations," "Inappropriate/Lewd Conduct," "Insubordination," "Aggressive/Violent Behaviour," and "Weapons Related Incidents," indicate that the firm's personnel lacked discipline.¹²

These explanations are, like the one offered by Prince, quite reasonable, and it is likely that at least some of Blackwater's personnel did, indeed, lack discipline or feel that they should be able to operate with complete autonomy. However, it is important to highlight the fact that Blackwater's security personnel tended to be experienced military veterans from western military forces, who should not, as a group, be prone to ignoring directives or demonstrating ill-discipline during military-like operations.¹³ In fact, given their prior western military training and indoctrination, these personnel, as a group, should be among the least likely people in the world to exhibit this sort of behaviour, at least in the absence of specific encouragement. Moreover, there is no reason to assume that Blackwater's personnel were less disciplined or had been

¹¹ Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 137.

¹² *Ibid.*, 164-166; Majority Staff, "Memorandum - Additional Information about Blackwater USA," (Washington, DC: The Congress of the United States, October 1, 2007), 13; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 10-11.

¹³ Virtually every incident report that contains information on the background of the Blackwater personnel involved states that the personnel were veterans of the U.S. armed forces or another western military force. Dunigan, *Victory for Hire*, 1; House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 24, 91, 98, and 110; Simons, *Master of War*, 169; United States Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, "Review of Security Programs at U.S. Embassy Baghdad," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, July 2005), 30.

granted greater autonomy than the personnel of any other private security company that operated during the Iraq War, and yet no accounts of this conflict suggest that any other firm came even close to matching Blackwater's body count.

Of even greater importance, if these explanations are valid, then Blackwater's security teams should not have exhibited clear patterns of behaviour since it is implausible that each undisciplined, autonomous team would decide, on its own, to behave in a fairly consistent way during each of their security operations and also behave in a way that is fairly consistent with the behaviour of the firm's other teams. In fact, as this paper makes clear, precisely the opposite occurred because the behaviour of Blackwater's security teams fell into clear patterns that are distinct from those demonstrated by their counterparts in DynCorp. Specifically, the firm's security teams tended to fire upon suspected threats more quickly, at greater distances, and with more bullets and were also considerably more likely to abandon the people they shot at when compared to DynCorp's personnel. This suggests that the violent behaviour of Blackwater's personnel was driven, at least in part, by a distinguishing feature of the firm itself: Blackwater's unique military culture.

The Ideational Theory of Tactical Violence

The central claims of the ideational theory of tactical violence are that the behavioural norms that make up a private security company's military culture have a strong influence on the degree of violence employed by that firm's personnel and that, in turn, the degree of violence employed by these personnel strongly affects two security outcomes. These include, first, the degree of security enjoyed by the people under the firm's protection, which include the firm's personnel and clients, and, second, the degree of security enjoyed by other actors in the firm's

operating environment, which include insurgents, civilians, the personnel of other private security companies, and the members of national security and military forces. This paper focuses on the second of these security outcomes.

The theory reasons that, if a private security company's military culture is made up of norms that encourage its personnel to employ tremendous violence, then its personnel should, indeed, tend to employ tremendous violence during their security operations. It further reasons that, if a firm's personnel tend to employ tremendous violence during their security operations, then they should also tend to enhance the security of themselves and the people under their protection and undermine the security of other actors in their operating environment. This is because, when a private security company uses tremendous violence by, for instance, firing off great quantities of bullets at suspected threats, this increases the chance that it will harm not only legitimate threats, such as insurgents, but also civilians and other non-threatening actors in a conflict zone. This assumption is well supported in the literature on the use of violence in armed conflicts.¹⁴ Therefore, when applied to Blackwater, a firm that maintained a military culture that encouraged the use of tremendous violence, the theory posits that the very same behavioural norms that helped make its personnel very good at protecting themselves and their clients also helped make them a menace to Iraqi society.

As with a national military force, a private security company's military culture is made up of multiple norms that guide the behaviour of its personnel in a range of areas, from ceremonial decorum to dealing with the news media. The ideational theory of tactical violence

¹⁴ Paul Dixon, "Hearts and Minds?": British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 3 (June 2009): 375; Alexander B. Downes, "Introduction: Modern Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Comparative Perspective," *Civil Wars* 9, no. 4 (December 2007): 318; John M. Hawkins, "The Costs of Artillery: Eliminating Harassment and Interdiction Fire During the Vietnam War," *The Journal of Military History* 70, no. 1 (January 2006): 92-93 and 96; Yagil Levy, "The Tradeoff between Force and Casualties: Israel's Wars in Gaza, 1987-2009," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 27, no. 4 (2010): 387.

focuses on the particular behaviour norms in a private security company's military culture that influence how its personnel use violence during their security operations. The theory, thus, assumes that, when a private security company emphasizes norms encouraging personal initiative, it encourages its personnel to take it upon themselves to engage suspected threats, rather than wait for an order to do so. Moreover, the theory assumes that, when a private security company emphasizes norms encouraging proactive use of force, it encourages its personnel to employ force very quickly against suspected threats, even before such threats have used force against the security personnel or their clients. Encouraging the proactive use of force tells a firm's personnel that it is acceptable and legitimate to try to harm a person, such as a pedestrian or the driver of a vehicle, on the mere *suspicion* that such a person *could* inflict harm on the firm's personnel or clients in the near future.

Finally, the theory assumes that, when a private security company emphasizes norms encouraging its personnel to exercise an exclusive approach to security, it encourages its personnel to care only about the security of themselves and their clients and, as a result, to discount the security of insurgents, civilians, and other actors in their operating environment.¹⁵ Several studies of inter-group violence have indicated that attempts to aggravate existing in-group/out-group hostility, which is likely to be present in cases involving a largely Western private security force operating in a Middle Eastern country, can increase the probability that violence will break out between members of the in-group and members of the out-group.¹⁶ As

¹⁵ Gavin Duffy and Nicole Lindstrom, "Conflicting Identities: Solidarity Incentives in the Serbo-Croatian War," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 1 (2002): 76.

¹⁶ Kristin M. Bakke, "Beslan and the Study of Violence," *Political Geography* 28, no. 1 (January 2009): 17; Donald G. Dutton, Ehor O. Boyanowsky, and Michael Harris Bond, "Extreme Mass Homicide: From Military Massacre to Genocide," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10 (2005): 457; Helen Fein, "Explanations of Genocide," *Current Sociology* 38, no. 1 (March 1990): 47-48; Rui J. P. de Figueiredo and Zachary Elkins, "Are Patriots Bigots? An Inquiry into the Vices of In-Group Pride," *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 1 (January 2003): 172; Stuart J. Kaufman, "Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap: Reconciliation Initiatives and Conflict Resolution in Ethnic Wars," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 2 (2006): 202.

Dutton et al put it, if the members of a particular group, such as a security force, come to believe that they should do whatever they need to do to protect their fellow group members from potential threats posed by actors outside the group, then, “Behaviour towards... (actors outside the group)... that would previously have been considered inconceivable now becomes acceptable.”¹⁷ Taking this into account, when a firm encourages its personnel to exercise an exclusive approach to security, the firm is, in effect, telling its personnel to believe that their lives and the lives of other members of the in-group, such as their clients, matter more than the lives of members of the out-group, such as insurgents, civilians, the personnel of other private security companies, and the members of national security and military forces. When this norm is accepted by the personnel of a private security company (the in-group), they should be quite willing to harm members of the out-group in order to reduce the probability that harm will befall members of the in-group.¹⁸

The ideational theory of tactical violence makes several specific, testable predictions about how the behavioural norms contained in a private security company’s military culture should influence the behaviour of its security personnel. First, the theory predicts that the security personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security should tend to fire their weapons more quickly, after observing a suspected threat, than the security personnel of firms that do not place strong emphasis on these norms. For instance, although the security personnel of firms that strongly emphasize these norms should often issue non-violent warnings to suspected threats before firing their weapons, they should escalate to using deadly force more quickly than their counterparts in firms that do not strongly emphasize

¹⁷ Dutton, Boyanowsky, and Bond, "Extreme Mass Homicide," 456.

¹⁸ Bakke, "Beslan and the Study of Violence," 17.

these norms. Security personnel who behave in this manner, in effect, reduce the amount of time available for a suspected threat to alter its behaviour and attempt to convince the security personnel that it means them no harm by, for example, dropping a weapon, halting its approach, or altering its course away from the security personnel and their clients. This, in turn, means that security personnel who behave in this manner are more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than are security personnel who behave in a less violent manner.

The theory also predicts that the security personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security should tend to fire their weapons toward suspected threats at greater distances than the security personnel of firms that do not place strong emphasis on these norms. Employing the assumption that the suspected threats engaged by various firms travel, on average, at the same speed, security personnel who behave in this manner, again, reduce the amount of time available for a suspected threat to alter its behaviour and attempt to convince the security personnel that it means them no harm. This, in turn, means that security personnel who behave in this manner are more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than are security personnel who behave in a less violent manner.

In addition, the theory predicts that the security personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security should tend to fire a greater number of bullets at suspected threats than the security personnel of firms that do not place strong emphasis on these norms. Since each bullet fired could, of course, seriously injure or kill a suspected threat, security

personnel who behave in this manner are more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than are security personnel who behave in a less violent manner.

Finally, the theory also predicts that the security personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security should tend to abandon a greater proportion of the victims they produce through their use of violence, rather than offer them assistance, when compared to the security personnel of firms that do not place strong emphasis on these norms. Since the security personnel of these firms have been encouraged to care only about the security of their own colleagues and clients, they should feel no obligation to assist any insurgents, civilians, or other actors they harm through their use of violence. Moreover, since abandoning wounded victims could allow their injuries to worsen or even allow them to die, security personnel who behave in this manner are more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than security personnel who behave in a less violent manner.

Blackwater's Military Culture

Although it has never been discussed in detail, the notion that Blackwater maintained a distinct military culture is widely supported by both former employees and scholars who have studied the firm. Engbrecht, for example, argued that the firm maintained a, “group mind-set,” that strongly influenced the behaviour of the firm’s personnel in Iraq.¹⁹ Suzanne Simons, who authored one of the first in-depth books on Blackwater, recognized that Prince and his other senior personnel took pride in the distinct “culture” that they developed for their organization.²⁰ Moreover, while referring to it as, “the Blackwater system,” Gary Jackson, who served as the

¹⁹ Engbrecht, *America's Covert Warriors*, 16.

²⁰ Simons, *Master of War*, 237.

firm's president until 2009, has acknowledged that the firm maintained a distinct culture that every employee was encouraged to adopt and adhere to.²¹ This culture placed strong emphasis on norms encouraging the firm's personnel to exercise personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security. In other words, the firm encouraged its personnel to believe that they should take it upon themselves to engage suspected threats, to quickly use deadly force against suspected threats if they thought a threat might try to harm them in the near future, and to simultaneously prioritize the security of themselves and their clients and discount the security concerns of suspected threats. None of the publically available information on DynCorp suggests that it placed a similar degree of emphasis on any of these norms within its military culture.

PERSONAL INITIATIVE

Blackwater's military culture strongly encouraged its personnel to demonstrate personal initiative, meaning they were encouraged to take it upon themselves to engage the suspected threats they might encounter during their security operations rather than waiting for a more senior employee to order them to engage.²² Tim Beckman, who worked as a security contractor and trainer for Blackwater from 2004 to 2009, recalled that the firm's training and indoctrination program ran new employees through, "full spectrum scenarios, where we learned to address situations," such as insurgent attacks and vehicles that failed to stay away from the firm's security convoys.²³ For example, the firm ran its personnel through a variety of simulated tactical drills on roadways and a mockup village, complete with training assistants posing as armed

²¹ Fred Rosen, *Contract Warriors: How Mercenaries Changed History and the War on Terrorism* (New York, NY: Alpha, 2005), 34.

²² Simons, *Master of War*, 56 and 237.

²³ Tim Beckman, *Blackwater from the Inside Out*, Kindle ed. (New York, NY: HDTI, 2010), Loc. 377-378.

insurgents, to indoctrinate them to believe that they should take it upon themselves to react to possible threats.²⁴ Reflecting on this aspect of the firm’s military culture, Simons rightly argued that, “Blackwater, in a lot of ways, reflects Prince’s own personality: stubborn, driven, and obsessed with finding ways to make things happen.”²⁵ Jim Sierawski, Blackwater’s Director of Training during the period under study, similarly, noted that his firm encouraged all of its security personnel to belief that they should simply, “do what they have to do,” to accomplish their security operations.²⁶

PROACTIVE USE OF FORCE

Blackwater’s military culture also strongly encouraged its personnel to use force proactively when they encountered a possible threat.²⁷ Indeed, Blackwater encouraged its security personnel, who were known as “shooters” within the firm’s military culture, to use force very quickly if they believed that a suspected threat *might* try to harm them or their clients in the near future.²⁸ Beckman reflected this belief when he stated that, “Adults get what they get when its game time,” meaning that he and his colleagues believed it was acceptable to inflict serious harm upon any adults who might pose a threat to them.²⁹ Prince conveyed this aspect of the firm’s military culture during his testimony before a congressional committee in October 2007. When asked by Congressmen John Tierney why Blackwater personnel, “fire first, ask questions

²⁴ Ibid., Loc. 385-386.

²⁵ Simons, *Master of War*, 265.

²⁶ Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2007), 198.

²⁷ Beckman, *Blackwater from the Inside Out*, Loc. 287-289, 295-296, 303, 304, and 307.

²⁸ Ibid., Loc. 65; Burke et al., "Second Amended Complaint in *Abtan v. Blackwater*," 3 and 9; Dan Laguna, *You have to Live Hard to be Hard: One Man's Life in Special Operations*, Kindle ed. (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2010), Loc. 3475.

²⁹ Beckman, *Blackwater from the Inside Out*, Loc. 724.

later,” when they encounter a suspected threat, such as an approaching vehicle, Prince made the following statement:

Sir, like I said, the bad guys have made a precision weapon (a vehicle-based improvised explosive device). The Air Force has a system called a DIRCM, Directional Infrared Countermeasures. It is used to break the lock of incoming surface-to-air missiles. It shines a laser in the seeker head. The missile breaks lock, and it veers away. We have to go through a use of force continuum to try to break the lock of this potential deadly suicide weapon.³⁰

This statement suggests that Prince wanted his employees to view any approaching unidentified vehicle, regardless of whether it was overtly carrying weapons or had attempted to inflict harm, as a probable deadly threat that simply had to be stopped before it could harm a security team or its clients. Al Clark, one of the chief designers of Blackwater’s training and indoctrination program, likewise, argued that the firm’s personnel were encouraged to “get over” any reservations they may otherwise have had about using their armoured vehicles as weapons in Iraq to disable unidentified vehicles or their drivers whenever they approached a security convoy or failed to quickly get out of its way.³¹

Highlighting this aspect of the firm’s military culture, Robert Young Pelton argued that, “if they do come under attack, Blackwater has a policy of using overwhelming firepower to break contact...”³² Human Rights First, likewise, argued that Blackwater’s employees maintained a, “‘shoot-first, ask questions later - or never’ attitude.”³³ In addition, though they are by no means impartial observers, it is worth noting that lawyers acting on behalf of some of the victims of the Nisour Square incident argued in U.S. federal court that, “Blackwater has created and

³⁰ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 78-79.

³¹ Scahill, *Blackwater 1st edition*, 72.

³² Robert Young Pelton, *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2006), 111 and 201.

³³ Human Rights First, "Private Security Contractors at War," 3.

fostered a corporate culture,” which encourages, “excessive and unnecessary use of force by its employees.”³⁴ Furthermore, Pelton also argued that Blackwater’s “brash” and “aggressive persona” set it apart from other private security companies, such as the British firm Hart, which encouraged its employees to refrain from using force whenever possible.³⁵

EXCLUSIVE APPROACH TO SECURITY

Finally, Blackwater’s military culture strongly encouraged the firm’s personnel to develop an exclusive approach to security, meaning they were encouraged to prioritize the security of themselves and their clients far above that of any other actor they may encounter in their operating environment, such as insurgents, civilians, the employees of other private security companies, Iraqi security personnel, and soldiers serving with the U.S.-led military coalition.³⁶ According to Prince, Blackwater encouraged its personnel to quickly, “get off the X,” when they encountered a suspected threat, meaning they were encouraged to use whatever means they deemed necessary to escape a threatening situation, including firing their weapons in fully automatic mode or employing their armoured vehicles as battering rams to smash through unarmoured civilian vehicles.³⁷ Moreover, Clark argued that the firm’s personnel were encouraged to believe that they should not concern themselves with the probable consequences of using deadly force during their security operations: “Your car can be a 3,000 pound weapon when you need it. Hit and run. Trust me. The police aren’t coming to your house because you

³⁴ Burke et al., "Second Amended Complaint in *Abtan v. Blackwater*," 9.

³⁵ Pelton, *Licensed to Kill*, 111, 201, and 296-297. Pelton supported his argument with a statement from Hart’s CEO, who argued that, “It’s abhorrent to shoot a warning shot. It’s never nice to discharge your weapon.” Pelton, *Licensed to Kill*, 297.

³⁶ Deborah Avant et al., "The Mercenary Debate: Three Views," *The American Interest* May/June 2009; Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 163-164; Pelton, *Licensed to Kill*, 296.

³⁷ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 61; Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2006), 332.

left the scene of an accident.”³⁸ By instilling this belief among the firm’s security personnel, the firm was, in effect, telling its employees that the victims of their violence do not “matter.”

These beliefs were accepted and adhered to among the firm’s employees. A private security contractor who worked for one of Blackwater’s competitors argued that one of the defining characteristics of the firm’s personnel was that they had an inflated sense of their own and their client’s security concerns and, simultaneously, discounted the security concerns of everyone else they encountered in Iraq.³⁹ For example, Ann Exline Starr, an American who travelled under the protection of Blackwater personnel while working as an advisor for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, recalled that the Blackwater personnel assigned to her stated that, ““Our mission is to protect the principal at all costs. If that means pissing off the Iraqis, too bad.””⁴⁰ Starr went on to argue that the firm’s security personnel understood that they, “are going to be judged by their bosses solely on whether they get their client from point A to point B, not whether they win Iraqi hearts and minds along the way.”⁴¹ Finally, multiple Blackwater employees, such as Dan Laguna, a senior pilot and director of Blackwater’s flight operations in Iraq, and Tommy Vargas, one of the firm’s ground personnel in Iraq, have argued that all of the firm’s personnel believed that, “Your own survival is the ultimate monkey,” and that their colleagues would, in Laguna’s words, “never leave them behind no matter what happened,” during a security operation.⁴²

³⁸ Scahill, *Blackwater 1st edition*, 72.

³⁹ Engbrecht, *America's Covert Warriors*, 35.

⁴⁰ Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 139.

⁴¹ Quoted in House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 77.

⁴² Laguna, *You have to Live Hard to be Hard*, Loc. 671-672 and 3585; Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 332.

Applying the Ideational Theory of Tactical Violence to Blackwater's Security Operations during the Iraq War

The predictions put forward by the ideational theory of tactical violence, regarding how private security companies should behave during their security operations, were well-supported by the available evidence on Blackwater's security operations during the Iraq War. This section analyzes each of the theory's predictions in turn.

ENGAGEMENT TIME

The ideational theory of tactical violence predicted that the security personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security should tend to fire their weapons more quickly, after observing a suspected threat, than the security personnel of firms that do not place strong emphasis on these norms. For instance, although the security personnel of firms that strongly emphasize these norms should often issue non-violent warnings to suspected threats before firing their weapons, they should escalate to using deadly force more quickly than their counterparts in firms that do not strongly emphasize these norms. Security personnel who behave in this manner, in effect, reduce the amount of time available for a suspected threat to alter its behaviour and attempt to convince the security personnel that it meant them no harm by, for example, dropping a weapon, halting its approach, or altering its course away from the security personnel and their clients. This, in turn, means that security personnel who behave in this manner are more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than are security personnel who behave in a less violent manner.

This prediction was supported by the behaviour of Blackwater’s personnel in Iraq. For instance, in 36 incidents, representing just over 10 percent of the incidents where the firm’s personnel fired their weapons, the personnel’s initial response to a suspected threat was to fire at it. To be clear, although the firm’s personnel first issued a non-violent warning in 86 percent of all the incidents where they also fired their weapons, the firm’s incident reports indicate that, in more than one out of every ten incidents, its personnel did not issue a non-violent warning before engaging a suspected threat with deadly force. In many of these incidents, Blackwater’s fire probably took the suspected threat by complete surprise and, thus, provided no time for the suspected threat to alter its behaviour and attempt to convince the security personnel that it meant them no harm. DynCorp’s employees, in contrast, offered non-violent warnings in 98 percent of all the incidents where they also fired their weapons and never initiated an engagement with a suspected threat by firing their weapons. Therefore, all of the suspected threats that DynCorp ultimately fired upon were afforded at least some time to alter their behaviour before being engaged with deadly force.

TABLE 3 First Behavioural Responses to Suspected Threats

| | Issue Non-Violent Warning | Ram Suspected Threat | Fire at Suspected Threat | Attempt to Flee Location of Incident | Stop Moving |
|------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Blackwater | 277 85.76% | 1 0.31% | 33 10.22% | 9 2.79% | 3 0.92% |
| DynCorp | 53 98.15% | 0 0.00% | 0 0.00% | 1 1.85% | 0 0.00% |

Moreover, Blackwater’s personnel fired at suspected threats twice as often (30 percent of the time) during the second stage of a violent incident than their counterparts in DynCorp, who fired during this stage in fewer than 15 percent of the incidents where they fired at all. DynCorp’s personnel were much more likely to issue another non-violent warning as their

second behavioural response to a suspected threat, for they did so in 83 percent of the incidents where they ultimately fired their weapons, than were Blackwater’s personnel, who did so in only in 67 percent of the incidents where they fired their weapon at some point.

TABLE 4 Second Behavioural Responses to Suspected Threats

| | Issue Non-Violent Warning | Ram Suspected Threat | Fire at Suspected Threat | Attempt to Flee Location of Incident | Stop Moving |
|------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Blackwater | 216 67.08% | 3 0.93% | 95 29.50% | 6 1.86% | 2 0.62 |
| DynCorp | 45 83.33% | 0 0.00% | 8 14.81% | 0 0.00% | 1 1.85% |

As the theory predicted, Blackwater’s personnel killed and seriously injured numerous suspected threats during incidents where they fired their weapons relatively quickly, and, thus, afforded very little time for the suspected threats to alter their behaviour. In fact, virtually all of the deaths inflicted by Blackwater’s security teams occurred during incidents where the firm’s personnel chose to fire their weapons as their first and/or second behavioural response to a suspected threat. Specifically, at least 55 out of the 62 known shooting deaths (89 percent) inflicted by the firm’s personnel occurred during these incidents. In addition, although at least 26 of these victims were insurgents, 29 of the known victims were unarmed civilians. For example, in Baghdad on May 12, 2005, a Blackwater security team immediately fired at a taxi that had stopped at an intersection to allow the firm’s convoy to proceed.⁴³ This action caused the death of one of the occupants of the taxi and seriously injured another. In a highly controversial incident, which occurred on May 24, 2007, one of the firm’s security teams issued a brief warning before firing at and killing the driver of a maroon sedan near the Baghdad headquarters

⁴³ Miller, *Blood Money*, 169-171; Elizabeth Palmer, "I Went to a Meeting and Somebody Died," *CBS News*, January 23, 2010; Scahill, *Blackwater 1st edition*, 72-73.

of the Iraqi Interior Ministry.⁴⁴ Immediately following the incident, dozens of Interior Ministry commandos chased down and surrounded the Blackwater convoy, with their AK-47s drawn, in an effort to prevent the convoy from escaping to the Green Zone. This provoked a lengthy “Mexican standoff” on a Baghdad street, as the commandos and Blackwater employees aimed their weapons at each other, and waited for the first shot to be fired.⁴⁵ Finally, during the infamous Nisour Square incident, which saw Blackwater personnel kill 17 Iraqi civilians and seriously injure 24 others, the security team involved, again, issued a single warning and, moments later, opened fire on pedestrians and motorists in the crowded Baghdad traffic circle.⁴⁶

Furthermore, at least 71 of the 86 known serious injuries inflicted by Blackwater’s security teams, which represents 83 percent of the known serious injuries inflicted by these actors during the 2005-2007 period, occurred during incidents where the firm’s personnel chose to fire their weapons as their first and/or their second behaviour response to a suspected threat. In addition, while at least 34 of these victims were insurgents, 37 of the known victims were unarmed civilians. Besides the serious injuries that occurred during the incidents discussed earlier in this section, the firm’s security teams inflicted serious injuries on suspected threats

⁴⁴ Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 173-175; Steve Fainaru, "Guards in Iraq Cite Frequent Shootings; Companies Seldom Report Incidents, U.S. Officials Say," *The Washington Post*, October 3, 2007; Steve Fainaru and Saad al-Izzi, "U.S. Security Contractors Open Fire in Baghdad; Blackwater Employees Were Involved in Two Shooting Incidents in Past Week," *The Washington Post*, May 27, 2007; Paul Krugman, "Hired Gun Fetish," *The New York Times*, September 28, 2007; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 11-12; Simons, *Master of War*, 163; Michael Welch, "Fragmented Power and State-Corporate Killings: A Critique of Blackwater in Iraq," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 51, no. 3-4 (2009): 354.

⁴⁵ Fainaru and al-Izzi, "U.S. Security Contractors Open Fire in Baghdad."; Krugman, "Hired Gun Fetish."; Welch, "Fragmented Power and State-Corporate Killings," 354.

⁴⁶ Sarah K. Cotton et al., *Hired Guns: Views About Armed Contractors in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 2010), 25-26; Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 177; Jomana Karadsheh and Alan Duke, "Blackwater Incident Witness: 'It Was Hell,'" *CNN.com*, October 2, 2007; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 5 and 32-33; Simons, *Master of War*, 176 and 261; Jeffrey S. Thurner, "Drowning in Blackwater: How Weak Accountability over Private Security Contractors Significantly Undermines Counterinsurgency Efforts," *The Army Lawyer* (July 2008): 64-65; United States Department of Justice, "Transcript of Blackwater Press Conference," (Washington, DC: United States Department of Justice, December 8, 2008), 2-3; United States Department of State, "Blackwater Personnel Security Detail Involved in Lethal Incident," (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, September 17, 2007); Welch, "Fragmented Power and State-Corporate Killings," 355.

during several other incidents that saw them quickly resort to deadly force. For example, on August 29, 2005, one of the firm's security teams fired at and seriously injured the driver of an approaching Volkswagen Golf within two seconds of issuing a non-violent warning to the driver.⁴⁷ In addition, while providing security for an event at the Religious University in Al-Hillah, on February 8, 2007, one of the firm's security teams shot and incapacitated a suspected sniper immediately after spotting him.⁴⁸

ENGAGEMENT DISTANCE

The ideational theory of tactical violence also predicted that the security personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security should tend to fire their weapons toward suspected threats at greater distances than the security personnel of firms that do not place strong emphasis on these norms. Employing the assumption that the suspected threats engaged by various firms travel, on average, at the same speed, security personnel who behave in this manner, again, reduce the amount of time available for a suspected threat to alter its behaviour and attempt to convince the security personnel that it meant them no harm. This, in turn, means that security personnel who behave in this manner are more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than are security personnel who behave in a less violent manner.

⁴⁷ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for August 29, 2005," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, August 29, 2005); U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2005-0076," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, August 30, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 082905-01 - COM PSD Team Fires on Aggressive Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, August 29, 2005).

⁴⁸ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports for February 8, 2007," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, February 8, 2007); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 020807-01 - Threat Engaged by COM PSD Team," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, February 8, 2007).

This prediction was supported by the behaviour of Blackwater’s personnel in Iraq.⁴⁹ Indeed, regardless of whether the firm’s personnel fired immediately after observing a suspected threat, or at a later stage of an incident, they tended to engage suspected threats at far greater average distances than their counterparts in DynCorp.⁵⁰ For example, during the incidents where Blackwater’s personnel fired immediately after observing a suspected threat, they engaged the suspected threats at an average distance of 127 metres. As mentioned earlier, DynCorp’s personnel, in contrast, never initiated an incident by firing their weapons. When Blackwater’s personnel fired their weapons during the second stage of an incident, they tended to do so when the suspected threat was, on average, 67 metres away, which is almost three times farther than the average engagement distance of DynCorp’s personnel (24 metres) during this stage of an incident. This is a particularly interesting finding because it suggests that DynCorp’s personnel tended to refrain from firing their weapons during an early stage of an incident unless a suspected threat was very close and could, therefore, have easily caused a great deal of harm if it fired upon the private security team or exploded a bomb. Blackwater’s personnel, on the other hand, were frequently willing to fire upon threats that were much farther away.

TABLE 5 Mean Engagement Distances during First Four Stages of Incidents

| | First Stage | Second Stage | Third Stage | Fourth Stage |
|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Blackwater | 127 metres | 68 metres | 47 metres | 36 metres |
| DynCorp | N/A | 24 metres | 37 metres | 26 metres |

⁴⁹ Five Blackwater incidents were intentionally excluded from this analysis of mean engagement distances. These incidents were extreme outliers, for they involved engagement distances of 482, 500, 550, 600 and 1300 metres, which are considerably longer than the firm’s next-longest engagement distance of 350 metres. Including these incidents, would have, therefore, increased the firm’s mean engagement distances to a point where they would no longer accurately reflect the firm’s general behaviour.

⁵⁰ Given that most of the incidents where Blackwater and DynCorp’s employees fired their weapons involved firing upon an approaching vehicle, the average engagement distance tends to decrease at each stage of the incident as the suspected threat continued to approach toward the private security team.

In addition, when Blackwater's personnel fired their weapons during the third stage of an incident, they tended to engage suspected threats at an average distance of 47 metres, while DynCorp's personnel tended to fire at suspected threats that were, on average, 37 metres away during this stage. Finally, Blackwater's personnel tended to fire their weapons at suspected threats that were an average of 36 metres away during the fourth stage of an incident, while DynCorp's personnel, in contrast, tended to fire their weapons at suspected threat that were, on average, 26 metres away during this stage. This is another particularly interesting finding since the fourth stage of an incident was usually the stage during which private security teams fired their lengthiest bursts of bullets in a final attempt to neutralize a suspected threat. Consequently, this finding suggests that Blackwater's personnel were not willing to let threats get as close to themselves or their clients as DynCorp's personnel were before using tremendous deadly force to ensure the suspected threat was neutralized.

Moreover, if one employs the assumption that the suspected threats engaged by Blackwater's security teams approached the firm's personnel at approximately the same speed, on average, as those that approached DynCorp's security teams, the tendency of Blackwater's personnel to engage suspected threats at greater distances reduced the amount of time available for a suspected threat to alter its behaviour and attempt to convince the security personnel that it meant them no harm. For example, if a suspected threat was first observed when it was 100 metres away from a security team and traveled at the moderate speed of 50 kilometres per hour (14 metres per second), then it would have been afforded only two seconds to alter its behaviour before being fired upon by an average Blackwater security team but would have been afforded more than five seconds of alter its behaviour before being shot at by an average DynCorp team during incidents where the security teams chose to fire as their second behavioural response to a

suspected threat. Similarly, a suspected threat travelling at this speed would, on average, have been afforded only four seconds to alter its behaviour before being fired upon by a Blackwater security team, while, in contrast, the average DynCorp team would have afforded a more than five second grace period before firing their weapons during incidents where the security teams chose to fire as their third behavioural response to a suspected threat. Finally, a suspected threat travelling at this speed would have been afforded only about five seconds to alter its behaviour by the average Blackwater security team, but would have been granted more than six seconds to alter its behaviour by the average DynCorp security team during incidents where the security teams chose to fire as their fourth behavioural response to a suspected threat.

Although these temporal differences may seem small, they represent crucial extra seconds during which a suspected threat, particularly a civilian who intended no harm to the security a security team or its clients, could alter its behaviour and demonstrate that it, in fact, posed no danger to the security team of its clients. Indeed, by engaging suspected threats at considerably greater distances than their counterparts in DynCorp, Blackwater's personnel, in effect, denied suspected threats crucial time to alter their behaviour and attempt to avoid being fired upon. As the theory predicted, by engaging suspected threats at much greater distances, on average, Blackwater's security teams were more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than their counterparts in DynCorp. For instance, an analysis of incidents where Blackwater's security teams fired at suspected threats at distances exceeding the mean engagement distance of DynCorp's personnel, during each of the first four stages of an incident, indicated that Blackwater's personnel inflicted at least 33 deaths during relatively long-distance engagements.⁵¹ It is important to note that this number may not reflect all of the deaths

⁵¹ Since DynCorp's personnel never fired their weapons at suspected threat during the first stage of an incident, a conservative standard of "deaths and serious injuries inflicted during incidents with engagement distances in excess

inflicted by the firm's personnel during relatively long-distance engagements because information on engagement distances is, unfortunately, not publicly available for several of the firm's incidents. Any incident for which information on engagement distances was not available was not included in the analysis contained in this section. Regardless, since these 33 deaths represent 53 percent of the 62 known deaths inflicted by Blackwater's personnel during the 2005-2007 period, it is clear that a substantial proportion of the total deaths inflicted by the firm's personnel during this period were inflicted during relatively long-distance engagements.

For example, in the aftermath of a vehicle-based improvised explosive device attack on a Blackwater convoy in Mosul on September 19, 2005, which killed three of the firm's security personnel, a U.S. State Department security official, and an innocent bystander, who was crushed to death in his car when one of the firm's (momentarily airborne) GMC Suburbans landed on top of it, the firm's surviving personnel immediately responded to insurgent gunfire emanating from a building 125 metres away from their position.⁵² The firm's personnel killed four insurgents during this incident and seriously injured several others. Similarly, on September 9, 2007, members of multiple Blackwater security teams engaged dozens of insurgents, who were raining down small arms fire and RPGs from buildings near Amanat City Hall in Baghdad.⁵³ The firm's

of 74 metres during the first stage of the incident" was selected for analyzing the harm inflicted by Blackwater's personnel during this stage.

⁵² Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for September 19, 2005," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, September 19, 2005); House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 78-79; Richard A. Opiel and Sabrina Tavernise, "Attacks in Iraq Kill 9 Americans, Including State Dept. Aide," *The New York Times*, September 21, 2005; U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2005-0092," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, September 19, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 091905-01 - COM PSD Team Attacked by VBIED Causing Fatal Injuries to Four U.S. Citizens," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, September 19, 2005).

⁵³ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for September 9, 2007," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, September 9, 2007); Burke et al., "Second Amended Complaint in *Abtan v. Blackwater*," 10-11; Joshua Partlow and Sudarsan Raghavan, "Iraq Probe of U.S. Security Firm Grows; Blackwater, Accused of Killing 11 on Sunday, Cited in Earlier Deaths," *The Washington Post*, September 22, 2007; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 12; U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2007-00096," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, September 9, 2007); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 090907-01 - Complex Attack Against COM PSD Teams," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, September 9, 2007).

personnel killed five of the insurgents and seriously injured ten others during this engagement at a distance of about 200 metres. In addition, a Blackwater team providing security for a meeting at the Iraqi Ministry of Justice's headquarters building in Baghdad on February 2, 2007, chose to shoot and kill three armed Iraqi guards, which the team wrongly assumed were insurgents, at a distance of 137 metres.⁵⁴ Moreover, some of the firm's security teams initially fired on approaching cars on September 11 and 20, 2005, when the vehicles were 75 metres away, which is far in excess of the average engagement distances of their counterparts in DynCorp.⁵⁵ The firm's personnel killed the drivers of both vehicles during these incidents.

Furthermore, an analysis of incidents where Blackwater's security teams engaged suspected threats with their weapons at distances exceeding the mean engagement distance of DynCorp's personnel, during each of the first four stages of an incident, indicated that Blackwater's personnel inflicted at least 45 serious injuries during relatively long-distance engagements. As was the case for the analysis of suspected deaths that were inflicted during relatively long-term engagements, this figure may not reflect all of the serious injuries inflicted by the firm's personnel during relatively long-distance engagements because any incident for which the engagement distances were not known was excluded from this analysis. Nevertheless, this result suggests that at least 52 percent of the 86 known serious injuries inflicted by Blackwater's personnel during the 2005-2007 period were inflicted during relatively long-

⁵⁴ Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 170; Steve Fainaru, "How Blackwater Sniper Fire Felled 3 Iraqi Guards," *The Washington Post* (November 8, 2007); Scahill, *Blackwater 1st edition*, 11; U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 020707-01 - SAF Attack on a COM PSD," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, February 7, 2007).

⁵⁵ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for September 11, 2005," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, September 11, 2005); Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for September 20, 2005," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, September 20, 2005); U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2005-0084," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, September 11, 2005); U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2005-0093," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, September 20, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 091105-03 - COM PSD Team Fires on Aggressive Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, September 11, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 092005-02 - COM PSD Team Fires on Aggressive Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, September 20, 2005).

distance engagements. For example, on October 18, 2005, near an Iraqi police checkpoint in Baqubah, one of the firm's security teams initially fired upon an approaching Toyota Land Cruiser at a distance of 75 metres, and seriously injured the vehicle's driver.⁵⁶ Similarly, another security team seriously injured one of the occupants of a sedan near an Iraqi National Guard checkpoint in Al-Hillah on March 25, 2005, when the team engaged that approaching vehicle at a distance of 75 metres.⁵⁷ In addition, one of the firm's security teams injured three insurgents during a firefight at the Adhamiyah Court House in Baghdad on February 18, 2007, which saw engagements at distances of 60 and 200 metres.⁵⁸ Finally, engaging at a distance of 250 metres, one of the firm's security teams shot and seriously injured an insurgent at the Doura Power Plant in Baghdad on September 2, 2007.⁵⁹

QUANTITY OF BULLETS FIRED

In addition, the theory predicted that the security personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security should tend to fire a greater number of bullets at suspected threats than the security personnel of firms that do not place strong emphasis on these norms. Since each bullet fired could, of course, seriously injure or kill a suspected threat, security

⁵⁶ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for October 18, 2005," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, October 18, 2005); U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2005-0118," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, October 18, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 101805-02 - COM PSD Team Fires on Aggressive Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, October 18, 2005).

⁵⁷ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for March 25, 2005," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, March 25, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 032505-1 - PSD Team Fires on Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, March 25, 2005).

⁵⁸ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for February 18, 2007," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, February 18, 2007); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 021807-01 - SAF Attack on a COM PSD," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, February 18, 2007).

⁵⁹ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for September 2, 2007," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, September 2, 2007).

personnel who behave in this manner are more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than are security personnel who behave in a less violent manner.

This prediction was supported by the behaviour of Blackwater’s personnel in Iraq. Indeed, Blackwater’s personnel fired one bullet during 22 percent of the violent incidents they were involved in, between two and five bullets during 40 percent of the incidents, between six and 20 bullets during 12 percent of the incidents, between 21 and 50 bullets during four percent of the incidents, and more than 50 bullets during seven percent of the incidents. DynCorp, in contrast, fired one bullet during 46 percent of the violent incidents they were involved in, between two and five bullets during 33 percent of the incidents, between six and 20 bullets during five percent of the incidents, between 21 and 50 bullets during two percent of the incidents, and more than 50 bullets in another two percent of the incidents. Therefore, Blackwater’s personnel were much more prone to firing multiple bullets toward a suspected threat when compared to their counterparts in DynCorp.

TABLE 6 Quantity of Bullets Fired

| | Unknown | No bullets | 1 bullet | 2-5 bullets | 6-20 bullets | 21-50 bullets | Over 50 bullets |
|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Blackwater | 5 1.33% | 54 14.32% | 82 21.75% | 149 39.52% | 47 12.47% | 15 3.98% | 25 6.63% |
| DynCorp | 1 1.64% | 8 11.48% | 28 45.90% | 20 32.79% | 3 4.92% | 1 1.64% | 1 1.64% |

The disparity between the quantity of bullets fired by the personnel of these firms becomes particularly pronounced in the upper firing categories, for Blackwater’s personnel reported firing more than five bullets during 23 percent of the violent incidents they were involved in, while, in contrast, their counterparts in DynCorp reported firing more than five bullets during only eight percent of the incidents they were involved in. Therefore, Blackwater’s

personnel were almost three times more likely to have fired more than five bullets during an incident than their counterparts in DynCorp. This disparity is even more pronounced in absolute terms, since Blackwater's personnel reported firing more than five bullets during 87 incidents while DynCorp's personnel reported doing so in only five incidents. From this it is clear that virtually any suspected threat encountered by a DynCorp security team was likely to face, at most, a single burst of small arms fire or a series of single shots. Almost a quarter of the suspected threats encountered by a Blackwater security team, on the other hand, were likely to face multiple bursts of small arms fire and, in almost half of these incidents, a much larger quantity of bullets.

As the theory predicted, the tendency of Blackwater's personnel to fire comparatively large quantities of bullets at suspected threats contributed to the numerous deaths and serious injuries they inflicted in Iraq. Indeed, Blackwater's personnel killed and seriously injured the vast majority of their victims during incidents where they fired more than five bullets at a suspected threat. The numbers are quite dramatic. At least 56 of the 62 known shooting deaths attributed to Blackwater's personnel, representing 90 percent of the known shooting deaths inflicted by the firm between 2005 and 2007, were inflicted during incidents where the firm's personnel fired more than five bullets at a suspected threat. A typical incident of this sort occurred on April 13, 2005, as a Blackwater security team en route from Karballah to Al-Hillah was approached by a white Kia sedan with four male passengers.⁶⁰ After issuing non-violent warnings, which were ignored, the team fired a series of bursts at the vehicle, totaling between six and 20 bullets, which caused the death of one of the passengers. The firm ultimately paid

⁶⁰ Brian Bonfiglio, "BW SIR Karbala PSD (E-mail) sent to Frederick M. Piry, Paul Nassen, and Mike Rush," (Moyock, NC: Blackwater, April 13, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "2005BAGHDA01554 - Vehicle Threat Engaged by PSD Team Resulting in the Death of One Local National," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, April 13, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Preliminary Spot Report," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, April 13, 2005).

three thousand dollars in compensation to the family of this victim, who, like the other passengers, was an unarmed civilian. In addition, on February 2, 2006, one of the firm's security teams fired more than 50 bullets at an Iraqi taxi in Kirkuk, which caused the death of one person in the taxi and an innocent bystander.⁶¹ Furthermore, all of the incidents where the firm's personnel inflicted two or more shooting deaths saw them fire more than 50 bullets at a suspected threat. The Nisour Square incident is certainly the deadliest of these, with 17 civilian deaths.⁶² However, in another dramatic incident where the firm's personnel fired more than 50 rounds, which took place on September 9, 2007, four Blackwater security teams, with assistance from some of the firm's helicopter crews, killed five insurgents during a firefight near Amanat City Hall in Baghdad.⁶³

The pattern for serious injuries is quite similar, since the firm's personnel inflicted at least 71 out of the 86 known serious injuries attributed to their small arms fire during the 2005-2007 period, representing 83 percent of the known serious injuries during this period, during incidents where they fired more than five bullets at a suspected threat. For example, one of the firm's security teams fired between six and 20 bullets at an ambulance during an incident near the Iraqi Ministry of Health headquarters on August 12, 2006, which seriously injured three

⁶¹ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for February 2, 2006," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, February 2, 2006); Steve Fainaru, "Warnings Unheeded on Guards in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, December 24, 2007; Jonathan Finer, "State Department Contractors Kill 2 Civilians in N. Iraq," *The Washington Post*, February 9, 2006; Kirkuk Police, "Police Reports based on Accounts from Iraqi Eyewitnesses and Medical Examiners with Knowledge of February 7, 2006, Incident in Kirkuk," (Kirkuk, Iraq: Kirkuk Police, February 7, 2006); U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2006-0019," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, February 7, 2006); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 020706-02 - COM PSD Fires on Aggressive Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, February 7, 2006); Wikileaks, "Escalation of Force Conducted by BWS IVO Kirkuk: 2 Civ Killed, 0 CF Inj/Damage," (Kirkuk, Iraq: Wikileaks, February 7, 2006).

⁶² Carafano, *Private Sector, Public Wars*, 107; Dunigan, *Victory for Hire*, 71-72; Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 88; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 8; Simons, *Master of War*, 176 and 262.

⁶³ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for September 9, 2007."; Burke et al., "Second Amended Complaint in *Abtan v. Blackwater*," 10-11; Partlow and Raghavan, "Iraq Probe of U.S. Security Firm Grows."; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 12; U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2007-00096."; U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 090907-01 - Complex Attack Against COM PSD Teams."

people in the vehicle.⁶⁴ Another of the firm's security teams fired a similar quantity of bullets at a blue sedan near an Iraqi National Guard Checkpoint in Al-Hillah on March 25, 2005, which seriously injured one of the passengers in that car.⁶⁵ Likewise, during an incident in Baghdad on February 19, 2007, one of the firm's security teams fired between 21 and 50 bullets at a gray sedan, which seriously injured the car's driver.⁶⁶ Moreover, all of the incidents where the firm's personnel injured 10 or more people saw them fire more than 50 bullets at a suspected threat, and all but one of the incidents where they seriously injured three or more people saw them fire more than five bullets at a suspected threat. The Nisour Square incident, once again, saw the most serious injuries of any incident where the firm fired more than 50 bullets, with 24 serious injuries reported.⁶⁷ Moreover, the firm's personnel seriously injured ten insurgents during the firefight near Amanat City Hall on September 9, 2007, an incident in which the firm's personnel fired far more than 50 bullets.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for August 12, 2006," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, August 12, 2006); U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2006-0095," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, August 12, 2006); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 081206-01 - COM PSD Team Fires on an Aggressive Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, August 12, 2006).

⁶⁵ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for March 25, 2005.,"; U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 032505-1 - PSD Team Fires on Vehicle."

⁶⁶ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for February 19, 2007," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, February 19, 2007); U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2007-00025," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, February 19, 2007); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 021907-01 - COM TST Team Fires on Three Aggressive Vehicles," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, February 19, 2007).

⁶⁷ Carafano, *Private Sector, Public Wars*, 107; Dunigan, *Victory for Hire*, 71-72; Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 88; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 8; Simons, *Master of War*, 176 and 262.

⁶⁸ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for September 9, 2007.,"; Burke et al., "Second Amended Complaint in *Abtan v. Blackwater*," 10-11; Partlow and Raghavan, "Iraq Probe of U.S. Security Firm Grows.,"; Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 12; U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, "DS Report Number 2007-00096.,"; U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 090907-01 - Complex Attack Against COM PSD Teams."

ABANDONING THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Finally, the ideational theory of tactical violence also predicted that the security personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security should tend to abandon a greater proportion of the victims they produce through their use of violence, rather than offer them assistance, when compared to the security personnel of firms that do not place strong emphasis on these norms. Since the security personnel of these firms have been encouraged to care only about the security of their own colleagues and clients, they should feel no obligation to assist any insurgents, civilians, or other actors they harm through their use of violence. Moreover, since abandoning wounded victims could allow their injuries to worsen or even allow them to die, security personnel who behave in this manner are more likely to kill or seriously injure a suspected threat during an incident than are security personnel who behave in a less violent manner.

This prediction was supported by the behaviour of Blackwater's personnel in Iraq, since they consistently abandoned the suspected threats they fired upon by quickly driving away from the locations of violent incidents. Indeed, Blackwater's incident reports indicate that the firm's personnel abandoned the suspected threats they engaged about 90 percent of the time, which is a considerably higher rate of abandonment than DynCorp post-shooting abandonment rate of 72 percent. Moreover, virtually all of the incidents where Blackwater's personnel did not abandon a suspected threat were incidents where the suspected threat chose to flee the location of the incident. In contrast, during incidents where Blackwater's personnel could have decided to remain onsite and offer assistance to a suspected that had stopped moving after being fired upon, the firm's personnel almost always chose to abandon the suspected threat and drive away.

TABLE 7 Post-shooting Abandonment Rate

| | Remained at Location of Incident until Assistance Provided to Victim(s) | Left Location of Incident before Assistance could be Provided to Victim(s) |
|------------|---|--|
| Blackwater | 32 9.91% | 291 90.09% |
| DynCorp | 15 27.78% | 39 72.22% |

For example, a declassified email written by the U.S. State Department's Regional Security Officer for the city of Al-Hillah confirmed that a Blackwater security detail not only shot and killed an Iraqi man on June 25, 2005, but also failed to offer assistance or promptly report this incident to the State Department.⁶⁹ In addition, despite observing an Iraqi man's car become engulfed in a "ball of flames," on September 26, 2006, after forcing the vehicle into a telephone pole through a "counter-flow" maneuver, the security team involved chose to abandon the victim to his fate.⁷⁰ Likewise, a Blackwater security convoy abandoned dozens of dead and seriously injured victims in Nisour Square on September 16, 2007.⁷¹

One of the firm's employees captured the behaviour of his colleagues quite well when he stated that, "We shot to kill and didn't stop to check a pulse."⁷² The data contained in the PSCVID lend considerable support to this statement. For example, the firm's personnel abandoned at least 54 out of the 62 people they are known to have shot and killed during their security operations, which means they chose to abandon at least 87 percent of the people who are known to have died as a result of their use of deadly force. Likewise, the firm's personnel

⁶⁹ Quoted in House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 71; Human Rights First, "Private Security Contractors at War," 6-7; Majority Staff, "Memorandum - Additional Information about Blackwater USA," 8.

⁷⁰ "Counter-flowing" involves driving on the wrong side of the road, counter to the normal flow of traffic. Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 164; Iraq Body Count, "Database of Incidents of Civilian Deaths from Violence in Iraq," (Iraq Body Count, February 2, 2012); Majority Staff, "Memorandum - Additional Information about Blackwater USA," 8.

⁷¹ Scahill, *Blackwater 2nd edition*, 8.

⁷² Fainaru, *Big Boy Rules*, 42.

abandoned at least 70 out of the 86 people they are known to have shot and seriously injured during their security operations, which means they chose to abandon at least 81 percent of the people who are known to have been seriously injured by their gunfire.

Although it is difficult to determine precisely how many of the victims of Blackwater's violence would have survived if they had received prompt medical attention, accounts of the firm's incidents suggest that the behaviour of its security personnel likely sealed the fate of several victims. For example, the driver of a sedan who was shot by a Blackwater security team on Highway 4 between Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah on April 21, 2005, did not immediately die since, according to the firm's incident reports, he was observed driving his vehicle to the side the road and stopping.⁷³ The incident reports provide few other details about his fate but he apparently succumbed to his wounds later in the day. In addition, during an incident on October 24, 2005, one of the firm's security teams shot and quickly abandoned the driver of a Daewoo Prince in Al-Hillah.⁷⁴ According the firm's incident reports and accounts from Iraqi eyewitnesses, the driver was alive when the team left the area. He, however, died of his injuries while being driven to a hospital by an Iraqi bystander. Moreover, it is plausible that at least some of the 17 deaths that resulted from the firm's actions during the Nisour Square incident could have been prevented if the security team involved had remained onsite to reassess the situation, determine whether they had severely injured any civilians, and ensure that those victims received medical attention.

⁷³ Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for April 21, 2005," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, April 21, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 042205-1 - Attack on Chief of Mission Motorcade," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, April 22, 2005).

⁷⁴ Al-Hillah Investigation Court, "Investigation Court's Reports based on Accounts from Iraqi Eyewitnesses and Medical Examiners with Knowledge of October 24, 2005, Incident in Al-Hillah," (Al-Hillah, Iraq: Al-Hillah Investigation Court, October 24, 2005); Al-Hillah Police, "Police Reports based on Accounts from Iraqi Eyewitnesses and Medical Examiners with Knowledge of October 24, 2005, Incident in Al-Hillah," (Al-Hillah, Iraq: Al-Hillah Police, October 24, 2005); Blackwater, "PSD Incident Reports and Sworn Statements for October 24, 2005," (Baghdad, Iraq: Blackwater, October 24, 2005); U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 102405-06 - COM PSD Team Fires on Aggressive Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, October 24, 2005).

Conclusion

As predicted by the ideational theory of tactical violence, the data presented in this paper indicate that the personnel of private security companies that place strong emphasis on norms encouraging personal initiative, proactive use of force, and an exclusive approach to security may use tremendous violence during their security operations. Blackwater's security teams, whose tactical behaviour was guided by these norms, tended to fire upon suspected threats more quickly, at greater distances, and with a greater quantity of bullets and were also considerably more likely to abandon the people they shot at when compared to DynCorp's personnel, who did not strongly emphasize any of these norms. These actions, in turn, led to the death or serious injury of a majority of Blackwater's victims during the Iraq War.

Important policy implications can be derived from this study of military culture and private security companies. It is clearly risky to employ firms that maintain a military culture like Blackwater's because their personnel are likely to inflict more deaths and serious injuries than the personnel of firms that maintain a less bellicose culture. As a result, governments and other potential clients that choose to employ violence-prone firms like Blackwater could face significant criticism from the news media, human rights organizations, other governments, and the citizens, police, and soldiers who live and work in the firm's operating environment. Indeed, despite being just one of dozens of private security companies that participated in the Iraq War, Blackwater's unparalleled record of violence received far more negative news coverage than the actions of any other firm. Moreover, the firm's actions in Iraq have been the subject of numerous government investigations, criminal and civil legal proceedings, and protests staged by Iraqi citizens, and eventually motivated the Government of Iraq to bar the firm from operating in its

country.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the U.S. State Department's decision to continue and defend its use of Blackwater, even after some of its most egregious acts had become public knowledge, tarnished the reputation of the Government of the United States at home and abroad.⁷⁶ Clients who choose to employ a firm with a military culture akin to Blackwater's risk facing a similar backlash.

This study also indicates a need for potential clients in the market for private security services to evaluate the military culture of the firms vying for their business, rather than rely exclusively on easily quantifiable factors, like the size of a firm's personnel roster or its fleet of armoured vehicles, or the projected financial costs of its services, when deciding which firm to hire. Potential clients should examine accounts of a firm's development and activities in conflict zones, and discuss a firm's military culture with its executives, middle managers, trainers, and front-line security personnel. Specifically, potential clients should pose questions regarding how the firm's security personnel are encouraged to behave. Moreover, potential clients should demand access to the firm's incident reports to gain insight into how its personnel actually behaved during their previous security operations. Through this process, a potential client ought to be able to determine the critical behavioural norms emphasized within the firm's military

⁷⁵ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA."; House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Private Military Contractors in Iraq: An Examination of Blackwater's Actions in Fallujah," (Washington, DC: House of Representatives, The Congress of the United States, September 2007); Mark Landler, "Contractor to Continue Work in Iraq Temporarily," *The New York Times*, September 3, 2009; Ernesto Londono, "U.S. to Appeal Dismissal of Blackwater Case," *The Washington Post*, January 24, 2010; Mark Mazzetti and James Risen, "Security Company Faces Fines and a New Inquiry," *The New York Times*, November 19, 2009; James Risen, "Bribe Charges Prompt Iraqis to Look into Blackwater," *The New York Times*, November 12, 2009; James Risen, "Ex-Blackwater Guards Face Renewed Charges," *The New York Times*, April 23, 2011; James Risen and Timothy Williams, "As Iraq Tries to Oust Blackwater, U.S. Lines Up Other Security Options," *The New York Times*, January 30, 2009; Ginger Thompson and James Risen, "5 Guards Face U.S. Charges in Iraq Deaths," *The New York Times*, December 6, 2008; U.S. Embassy - Baghdad, "Spot Report - 021206-02 - COM PSD Team Fires on Aggressive Vehicle," (Baghdad, Iraq: U.S. Department of State, February 12, 2006); Timothy Williams, "Iraqis Angered as Blackwater Charges are Dropped," *The New York Times*, January 2, 2010.

⁷⁶ Fainaru, "U.S. Security Contractors Open Fire in Baghdad."; Mark Landler, "Clinton Tries to Reassure a State Dept. in Transition," *The New York Times*, February 5, 2009; James Risen, "End of Immunity Worries U.S. Contractors in Iraq," *The New York Times*, December 1, 2008; Alissa J. Rubin, "Talks with U.S. on Security Pact are at an Impass, the Iraqi Prime Minister Says," *The New York Times*, June 14, 2008; United States Department of State, "Embassy Continues Outreach on Personal Security Detail Incident," (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, September 19, 2007).

culture, which should allow them to develop reasonable expectations about how the firm's personnel will behave in a conflict zone.

Finally, although this paper largely focused on the harm inflicted by Blackwater's security teams upon Iraqi civilians, it is important to note that the firm's personnel were considered to be very good at protecting their clients from insurgent attacks. Indeed, a report released shortly after the Nisour Square incident by the Secretary of State's Panel on Personal Protective Services in Iraq concluded that the firm's, "security operations in Iraq have been highly effective in ensuring the safety of mission personnel."⁷⁷ Congressman Patrick McHenry, likewise, noted that, "Blackwater has protected dozens, if not hundreds, of Members of Congress, including myself and members of... (the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform)... when they travel to Afghanistan and Iraq.... Not one single Member of Congress has been injured nor killed under Blackwater protection, and for that I am grateful."⁷⁸ For their part, Blackwater's executives have boasted (correctly) that the firm did not experience, "a single loss of life or serious injury to our clients," despite conducting thousands of security operations in a very hostile operating environment.⁷⁹ The data presented in this paper lend considerable support to these statements, for it is clear that the tactical behaviour exhibited by Blackwater's personnel allowed them to fight off numerous armed attacks and, in the process, kill and seriously injure dozens of insurgents. Taking this into account, potential clients that intend to prioritize their own security above all other considerations, including the safety of other

⁷⁷ Eric J. Boswell et al., "Report of the Secretary of State's Panel on Personal Protective Services in Iraq," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, October 2007), 5.

⁷⁸ House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 18.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Rebecca Dunning, "Heroes or Mercenaries? Blackwater, Private Security Companies, and the U.S. Military," (Durham, NC: The Kenan Institute for Ethics, Duke University, 2010), 7. See also Eric Prince's testimony in House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Hearing on Blackwater USA," 56.

actors in their operating environment, would be well-served by a firm that shared Blackwater's bellicose military culture.

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