

WASHINGTON, February 23 – Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) today introduced legislation that would phase out private security contractors in war zones.

The United States last year employed more than 22,000 hired guns in Iraq and Afghanistan. They protected diplomats, trained military and police officers, repaired and maintained weapons systems. Contractors also were involved with interrogations and intelligence gathering.

“The American people have always prided themselves on the strength, conduct, and honor of our United States military. I therefore find it very disturbing that now, in the midst of two wars and a global struggle against terrorism, we are relying more and more on private security contractors – rather than our own service members – to provide for our national defense,” Sanders said.

“The behavior of private contractors has endangered our military, hurt relationships with foreign governments, and undermined our missions overseas,” Schakowsky added.

The *Stop Outsourcing Security Act* would restore the responsibility of the American military to train troops and police, guard convoys, repair weapons, administer military prisons, and perform military intelligence. The bill also would require that all diplomatic security be

undertaken by U.S. government personnel. The White House could seek exceptions, but those contracts would be subject to congressional oversight.

The legislation also would subject contracts exceeding \$5 million to congressional oversight. Agencies with military contractors would have to report the number of contractors employed, disclose the total cost of the contracts, and make public any disciplinary actions against employees.

High pay for contract workers in war zones both burdens taxpayers and saps military morale, Schakowsky and Sanders said. While some soldiers who risk their lives for their country struggle to support their families, private security company employees are paid two or three times as much, sometimes pocketing as much as \$1,000 a day.

Military officers in the field have said contractors operate like "cowboys," using unnecessary and excessive force uncharacteristic of enlisted soldiers. In 2007, guards working for a firm then known as Blackwater were accused of killing 17 Iraqis, damaging the U.S. mission in Iraq and hurting our reputation around the world. Later that year, a contractor employed by DynCorp International allegedly shot and killed an unarmed taxi driver.

Late last year, photos surfaced of lewd and drunken conduct by workers for ArmorGroup North America, a firm the State Department hired to provide security at the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

Some private security contractors have a history of fleecing taxpayers. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform investigated Blackwater's employment practices and found that the company classified security guards in a way that may have allowed the firm to skirt paying Social Security, Medicare, and Federal income taxes. A separate Small Business Administration investigation found that Blackwater may have made misrepresentations in order to qualify for \$110 million in government contracts set aside specifically for small businesses.

To read the bill, click [here](#) . To read a summary, click [here](#) .