

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 27, 2011) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) today introduced legislation called the *Stop Outsourcing Security Act* that would phase out private security contractors in conflict zones.

The bipartisan Commission on Wartime Contracting found that since 2001 armed private contractors have become the “default option” in Iraq and Afghanistan. These hired guns are employed by the United States for sensitive missions including training military and police officers and providing security for foreign dignitaries. The *Stop Outsourcing Security Act* (SOS) would restore the responsibility of the U.S. military and government to perform such functions.

“Our continued reliance on private security contractors endangers our military, damages our relationships with foreign governments, and undermines our global priorities,” **said Rep. Schakowsky.**

“Though we have the finest military in the world, we continue to outsource our security to private mercenaries, who answer to a corporation rather than a uniformed commander. When Senator Sanders and I introduced this legislation last year, we had 22,000 armed private contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, we have 28,178. We need this bill now more than ever.”

The SOS Act would prohibit the use of private contractors for military, security, law enforcement, intelligence, and armed rescue functions in conflict zones. It would also increase transparency over any remaining contracts by increasing reporting requirements and 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.

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.

“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 military – to provide for our national defense,” Sanders said.

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