

## **Legislation to Require White House Disclosure of Military Contracting**

**By Roxana Tiron**

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Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), a House Intelligence Committee member, introduced legislation requiring the Bush administration to disclose to what degree it relies on private military contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"For too long, the Bush administration has relied on guns-for-hire to carry out inherently governmental functions," Schakowsky said. "Contractors have operated under a veil of secrecy, without a public debate about the nature and scope of their operations."

She said Congress lacks evidence that contractors report to the appropriate military commanders in such regions.

"This legislation will shed light on the war business, so that Congress and the American people can determine when and where the outsourcing of our security to private firms is warranted," Schakowsky said.

The Iraq and Afghanistan Contractor Sunshine Act would require the departments of Defense, State, and the Interior and the U.S. Agency for International Development to provide Congress with descriptions of both contractual work performed in Iraq and Afghanistan and task orders in

excess of \$5 million.

The agencies also would have to report the number of contractors and subcontractors employed in Iraq and Afghanistan and the total costs of contracts there. The agencies would have to inform Congress about the number of wounded and killed contractors as well as disciplinary actions taken by the U.S. government against contractors who break the law.

The legislation has 16 co-sponsors, among them Reps. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), chairman of the Financial Services Committee, Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) and David Price (D-N.C.), chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations subcommittee.

According to a December 2006 GAO report, "DOD continues to have limited visibility over contractors because information on the number of contractors at deployed locations or the services they provide is not aggregated by any organization within DOD or its components." The Department of Defense has not reported casualty statistics for contractors operating in Iraq.

Schakowsky's bill comes on the eve of a Government Reform Committee hearing on contractors in Iraq.