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Bill Calls for Contractors to Exit Iraq

800 Armed Guards Would Leave Within Six Months

By Dana Hedgpeth

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An Illinois congresswoman yesterday proposed the rapid withdrawal of hundreds of armed security contractors from Iraq.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D) introduced legislation that she said would call for the phasing out of some 800 armed security contractors.

"There's been major examples of how these companies adversely affect the mission," Schakowsky said.

The contractors have come under increased scrutiny on a variety of issues, including their billing records.

Blackwater has been in the spotlight the most. On Sept. 16, armed contractors working for Blackwater and other firms were accused of killing a civilian.

Blackwater, DynCorp and Triple Canopy won the contract with the State Department in June 2005 to provide security for U.S. troops in Iraq.

"We understand it is going to take time to train and deploy what is a large number of people," Schakowsky said.

Critics say it is going to be difficult to find military personnel to replace the contractors. The limited number of military personnel available for such duties is a concern.

"There's so much stuff security contractors are doing, I just don't see all of them being replaced," said Dana Hedgpeth.