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America's Covert Warriors: Inside The World Of Private Military Contractors



Synopsis

Private military contractors, especially those in Iraq, have taken on far more than their original mandates required. Initially intended for combat support, they have become full-fledged warriors, many with little experience, scant oversight, and no accountability to the rules of engagement that constrain the U.S. military and coalition forces. When the occupation of Iraq turned into a fight against an insurgency, overwhelming U.S. and coalition military forces, the demand for private military contractors skyrocketed in 2003 and 2004. The explosive growth of such firms as Blackwater, Crescent, and others resulted in a relaxation of recruitment standards at precisely the same time that the U.S. military's own standards of recruitment began to falter, but the standards for private military contractors fell much further and faster. The predictable result included excessive civilian casualties, a human tragedy whose full dimensions have yet to be seen by the American public. Shawn Engbrecht has been training and recruiting private military contractors for more than a decade. Acknowledging that some private military contractors are out of control, he argues that the oft-made suggestion to fire them all is not the solution. Instead, Engbrecht contends that with proper training and development of recruits, along with enforceable regulation and oversight, private security companies can be successfully integrated into a total force package with a professional operational staff.

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Customer Reviews

This is the first time that I've felt significantly misled by the review process (particularly regarding books). Perhaps I should have been tipped-off by the unlikely volume of five-star ratings. This is not

to say that there isn't merit to this book. There is. My opinion is that it is largely confined to a few chapters (not the ones stuffed with peculiar anecdotes). I suspect that this product was a very good essay tortured into book form. To be fair, this book came third on a reading list including "Not a Good Day to Die" and "Imperial Grunts". As an essay, this piece may have found its place among them, but for tenacious redundancy and a filler of anecdotes that appear to be paraphrased. I don't know what other than paraphrasing would explain the similarity between his subjects' speaking styles and his own -that is, when he is writing in his third-person anecdotal style (quoting himself as "the author"). His style is markedly different elsewhere in the book (the portion which composes a convincing essay). I might dismiss the similarities of voice between the various accounts and reflections (including his own), based on common military service but for two reasons: A) Neither the subjects in the two other books I reference, nor my personal friends who've served (as relatively lowly 68w, 25s, 21b and marine) are so ineloquent, glib, and/or sensational. B) The commonalities seem to reflect more literary style than colloquialism. I think this guy had a lot of help crafting this book by people who found him marketable. I suppose a fine paper is less marketable. I propose that more harm than good was done by rounding it out and filling it up.

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