

Washington, D.C. - Congress will soon send the President two major bills to significantly improve the government's lax management and oversight of private security contractors. Currently in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are tens of thousands of armed contractors employed by U.S. agencies who are subject to minimal oversight and accountability.

U.S. Rep. David Price (D-NC) spearheaded the effort, along with Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), to include these provisions in the Defense and Intelligence Authorization bills when they were first approved by the House in May. The House passed the Defense bill today and is expected to pass the Intelligence bill tomorrow. The Senate is expected to take up the bills next week and subsequently send them to the President for his signature.

"With these measures Congress is stepping in where the President and his administration have failed to properly manage and account for its unprecedented reliance on contractors to perform functions that were previously exclusive to the government," Price said. "We are providing the military and other agencies with a mandate to better manage their contractors, and we are sending a message to contractors that they will be held to high standards, much like we demand of our own troops."

The Defense Authorization bill ([H.R. 1585](#)) will provide Congress with better information to conduct oversight of security contracting, require clear rules of engagement and minimum standards for hiring and training contractors, and enhance the military's role in coordinating the movement of contractor convoys. These measures are preventive in nature – they are designed to keep armed contractors on a tighter leash so that events such as the shootout involving Blackwater contractors in September are not repeated.

The Intelligence Authorization bill ([H.R. 2082](#)) will require the intelligence community to provide a detailed report to Congress on its use of contractors, including an assessment of what intelligence activities should be considered inappropriate and off limits to private contractors. The bill also requires an examination of the intelligence community's mechanisms and procedures for conducting oversight of contractors to ensure identification and prosecution of criminal violations, financial waste, fraud, or other abuses. "This report should give Congress a better understanding of the extent to which our intelligence agencies rely on private contractors," Price said. "In turn, it will spark a broader debate on what activities are appropriate for a private contractor to perform."

The House has previously passed Price's bill to subject all contractors in a war zone to the jurisdiction of U.S. criminal law ([H.R. 2740](#)). That measure is pending in the Senate. It would close a major loophole in the law that has allowed armed contractors to operate with impunity. The House passed the measure overwhelmingly in October.

"These three bills together should dramatically change the way our government uses and oversees contractors on the battlefield and in sensitive intelligence areas," Price said. "We are addressing an essential question of accountability. That means ensuring that our government has the tools to properly manage the contractors it employs and that it can punish those responsible for criminal misdeeds. I want to thank Chairmen Ike Skelton and Carl Levin and Chairmen Silvestre Reyes and John Rockefeller for working with us to include these important provisions in their legislation."

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