

## House Passes Price Contractor Bill

**Washington, D.C.** - The House of Representatives today overwhelmingly approved a bill introduced by Congressman David Price (D-NC), which would ensure that the U.S. government has the legal authority to prosecute crimes committed by U.S. contractor personnel working in war zones. The bill closes a major loophole in the law that allows thousands of contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan to operate with impunity. The final vote was 389 to 30.

Defense Department contractors are already covered under U.S. law, but contractors such as Blackwater USA, who work for the State Department and other agencies, are not held liable for criminal activity under current law. Price's bill would extend the jurisdiction of the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (MEJA) to cover all contractors working for the government in a war zone.

Price's bill also ensures that the Administration has the tools it needs to investigate and prosecute allegations of abuse. The MEJA Expansion and Enforcement Act (H.R. 2740) would require the FBI to have investigators in place where there is a significant contractor presence, so they can investigate alleged crimes.

During House debate Price noted that while the military goes to great lengths to ensure accountability, thousands of armed civilians in Iraq are not held responsible for actions that could damage the U.S. mission and our national security interests.

"Our military is the best fighting force in the world today, in large part because it is structured in a way that demands accountability, discipline, and unity of action," Price said. "But there is no clear chain of command for contractors, little in the way of standards for training and vetting personnel, and no legal accountability for misconduct."

The bill that the House approved today will now move to the Senate where leaders have announced plans to act swiftly on the measure.

"This bill will improve the law, and it will improve enforcement," Price said. "It will give our country the ability to hold contractors accountable, which will enhance our national security and the safety of our troops. And it will ensure that our country remains a model of law and integrity to the rest of the world. I applaud the solid bipartisan support for this critical measure in the House today."

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