

# NON-STATE ACTOR: DEFINING PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES

**Mark Fulloon**  
**Faculty of Arts, School of Humanities**  
**Griffith University, Queensland, Australia**

## Abstract

This article outlines several categories of Private Military Companies (PMCs) to distinguish between the different military services these organisations provide. In doing so, the article argues that an appropriate category is needed to understand the military operations these companies undertake. The article suggests that the PMCs can be divided into four categories: the Combat Offensive PMC, the Combat Defensive PMC, the Non-Combat Offensive PMC, and finally the Non-Combat Defensive PMC.

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few years, particularly since the end of the Cold War, there has been an increased prominence in the age-old profession of private military actors or private armies operating in armed conflicts purely on the basis of profit. These private military actors operating in today's post-Cold War conflicts, however, have transformed into a new modern form: the Private Military Company (PMC). PMCs are essentially business organisations that trade in professional services intricately linked to warfare. Moreover, PMCs are corporate bodies that specialise in the provision of military skills, including combat operations, strategic planning, intelligence, risk assessment, operational support, training and technical skills. PMCs have managed to transform the historically ubiquitous nature of *ad hoc* mercenaries into private companies to provide military services to state and non-state entities in exchange for money.

PMCs are a unique phenomenon born out of the rise in economic

globalisation, the changing transformation in the nature of warfare, organisational changes within the military structure, and the end of the Cold War. Since the early 1990s, state and non-state actors trying to protect people and assets from military threats within different conflict environments have become increasingly willing to turn to PMCs for military services. As a result, the global market for the PMC industry has significantly expanded. With an estimated growth rate of about seven per cent per annum, the global market for the PMC industry has developed into a versatile, global, multi-billion dollar industry (O'Brien 2000: 59-64; Securitas Annual Report 2006) .

Those mercenaries such as "Mad Mike" Hoare who rampaged across post-colonial Africa and other places in the Global South have almost disappeared, and their successors are now PMCs that are more corporatised, staffed by highly skilled retired military officers, ex-special forces units, technically specific skilled civil and military personnel, retired military frontline soldiers, intelligence personnel, and low-skilled military personnel (especially Global South personnel). PMCs have now put a corporate face on one of the world's oldest professions.

Since the South African-based but Bahamas-registered PMC Executive Outcomes (EO) first emerged more than 20 years ago, international attention has focused on the role and influence PMCs are having in conflicts, including the supporting and destabilising effects PMCs have on the systemic nature of military operations and military services. The analysis of PMCs such as EO's operations in Angola and Sierra Leone or Blackwater USA in Iraq does raise the provocative question of whether PMCs can contribute to stability and peace within the inter-state system. Although these two PMCs are now defunct, the use of PMCs in armed conflict shows few signs of diminishing in places such as Afghanistan or Iraq. PMCs offering military services in high-risk environments have flourished in recent years, particularly since the onset of the wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). In Iraq, it has been estimated that anywhere between 20 000 and 48 000 people have been employed by PMCs supplying various military services to coalition state agencies and multinational corporations (MNCs) working on reconstruction projects (Government Accountability Office (GAO) 2006).

## **2. Categorising PMCs**

While there can be problems inserting different PMCs into appropriate typologies, and also drawing boundaries that distinguish between different categories, placing PMCs into appropriate categories can contribute to clarity when discussing PMCs. Because of the military services that PMCs provide within the PMC industry, an appropriate categorisation of PMCs will be based on the primary military service these companies provide, and the primary activities in which PMCs generally undertake. EO for instance, was essentially a military battalion for hire, and its primary military service was to engage in offensive combat operations, while Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI) offered military training as its primary military service along with battlefield tactics. These PMCs such as EO and MPRI do deserve their own separate identity, definition, and typology along with other private military actors.

PMCs within the military industry neither look alike, nor do these companies even serve the same markets. PMCs vary in their market capitalisation, personnel, history, corporate interests, characteristics, and the geographic location of their headquarters and operational areas. However, as Singer (2003: 88) correctly points out, the common unifying factor for PMCs is that all these companies provide services that fall within the military domain. Therefore, this article suggests that PMCs can be divided into four categories. The first type of PMC is the Combat Offensive PMC, the second type is the Combat Defensive PMC, while the third type is the Non-Combat Offensive PMC, and finally the fourth type is the Non-Combat Defensive PMC. The PMCs Executive Outcomes, Blackwater USA (now Xe), MPRI, and Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) will be used as case studies to highlight these categories. This new taxonomy is more empirically logical and attuned to the military-business relationship that defines the PMC industry.

These four categories highlighted within this article draw from other PMC typological models within the literature which classify PMCs hierarchically by their level of lethality. In developing these four categories, this article has drawn from leading scholars researching PMCs such as Deborah Avant (2005), Kevin O'Brien (2000), Thomas Keane (1999), Doug Brooks (1999), Joanna Spear (2006) and Peter W Singer (2003). One of the leading scholars researching within the field of PMCs who formulated one of the most significant categories concerning PMCs is Peter W Singer (2000: 200) who established that there

were actually three different types of PMCs according to the range of military services and levels of lethality that PMCs were willing to offer. Singer (2003: 91) used an effective "tip of the spear" analogy to distinguish PMCs and attempted to categorise PMCs into three broad types of units linked to their location within battle space: PMCs that operate within the general military theatre, PMCs that operate in the general theatre of war, and those PMCs that operate in the actual area of operation, that is, the tactical battlefield. This helped Singer to separate the range of services and force levels between different PMCs. For Singer (2001: 200), the first type of PMC was the "military provider" firm that he placed at the tip of his spear. The second type of PMC was the "military consulting firm" that provided military advice and training, being placed in the middle of the spear. The third type of PMC was the "military support firm" that was placed at the bottom of the spear that provided logistical support, intelligence analysis, and supply chain management.

Thomas Keane also presented three categories of PMCs. For Keane (1999: 103-116), the first type of PMC is the "traditional" mercenary consisting of groups and individuals who have military skills directly applicable to combat or immediate military support. The second type of PMC is the late 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon consisting of high-quality tactical, operational, and strategic military advice for the structure, training, equipping, and employment of armed forces. Finally, the third type of PMC provides highly specialised services with a military application such as companies obtaining contracts within the military-industrial complex. However, this third type is not itself notably paramilitary in organisation or methods. Nonetheless, Keane's typology was also another one of the earlier examples of classifications developed to describe the PMC industry. Therefore Keane's work has represented an excellent innovation in the basic framework for describing and analysing the PMC industry.

Finally, Deborah Avant introduced a new direction to Singer's model by focusing on the "contract" rather than the PMC as a unit of analysis. Within Avant's (2005: 16) typology, these contracts were divided into two hierarchical categories based on external support and internal military support (police or paramilitary). Avant's first category covered armed combat operations, unarmed operational support (combat advice), military advice, military training, and logistics. For Avant, the second category covered military security, close personnel protection,

police advice and training, crime prevention, and intelligence. Brooks, on the other hand, moved the focus of PMCs to within the actual PMC industry *per se*. Brooks (1999: 42-47) attempted to group PMCs and PSCs into one single unit of analysis giving examples such as DynCorp, MPRI, Blackwater USA (Xe), AmorGroup, KBR, and International Charter Incorporated (ICI) as being in one and the same category. However, despite changing the unit of analysis, Avant's approach and Brooks's models still contain similar elements of the hierarchical organising criteria from the "tip of the spear" typological model from Singer. Although these models do not make explicit distinctions between PMC military services, nonetheless, these categories greatly assist in forming better categorisations of PMCs.

In doing so, the point of departure between combat and non-combat for each of the four categories is the "trigger finger" factor (Singer 2001: 201). The trigger finger factor is to highlight the degree to which PMCs directly engage in combat. For instance, Combat Offensive and Defensive PMCs have a greater trigger finger factor in comparison to Non-Combat Offensive and Defensive PMCs. In recognising the trigger finger factor, PMCs can be compartmentalised into easily recognisable aspects of lethality, offensiveness, defensiveness, and non-combativeness. However, lethality is not the only yardstick by which a PMC needs to be judged. Other military services such as military advice or military training need to be considered when analysing the strategic impacts PMCs have on conflicts. One could find at the sharp end (lethal action) PMCs such as EO, Sandline International, Blackwater USA (Xe), or Ghurkha Security Guards (GSG). At the tail end (non-lethal action) one could find PMCs such as MPRI offering military training on and off the battlefield, Saladin Security or Levdan that specialise in arms procurement, or Vinnell, KBR, Aegis, Airscan, or DynCorp that provide logistical, intelligence, or military training.

However, this binary distinction between combat and non-combat PMCs could still be seen as empirically flawed (or at least incomplete) because it is not uncommon for PMCs to be drawn into conflict even if the violence is not within the terms of their contract. After all, PMCs are involved in war-zones and those PMCs entering conflicts tend to be prepared for the eventuality of armed conflict, automatically possessing an "immediate capacity for violence" (Whyte 2003: 595). Yet, on other occasions, PMCs may not actually engage in armed combat at all. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the majority



of PMC personnel are former military personnel from well-trained Western military forces and also from within the Global South. Furthermore, regardless of the PMCs' stated or contractual intentions, PMCs will still be viewed as combative due to their immediate capacity for violence, especially in a conflict zone.

The four categories of PMCs are: the Combat Offensive PMC that engages in direct offensive combat operations, the Combat Defensive PMC that is in combat zones but is defensive in nature such as military security, the Non-Combat Offensive PMC that engages in direct offensive operations but not in a combat capacity such as military advice during a conflict or military training, and the Non-Combat Defensive PMC that performs no combat operations and is oriented toward defensive activities such as logistics. Offensive PMCs can include combat operations and military training that alter the strategic landscape of combat such as MPRI during the Balkans conflict. A defensive PMC will generally not actively seek out the enemy and engage in combat operations. In other words, this type of PMC will only engage in armed conflict when threatened by the enemy and when there is no other alternative but to engage in combat. Defensive PMCs will also include non-combat services such as interrogations, mine clearance, logistics, intelligence, supply-chain management, military advice, maintenance of high technology weapons and military hardware, to name but a few. In a general sense, most defensive PMCs will offer various military services stopping short of offensive combat operations. Most PMCs could be defined as defensive, such as DynCorp that provided border protection in Iraq against insurgents, but did not engage in combat operations unless fired upon or threatened (O'Brien 2007: 40). Therefore, offensive and defensive PMCs can be distinguished by their levels of combat capabilities and their levels of willingness to engage in combat operations.

### **3. Combat Offensive PMC**

The first type of PMC is the Combat Offensive PMC. These PMCs engage in offensive military combat operations that are intended to alter the strategic landscape of a conflict or warfare. Due to their combat capabilities, Combat Offensive PMCs are the most powerful within the PMC industry in terms of their military capabilities, their willingness to engage in combat operations, and their immediate proximity to viol-

ence. Combat Offensive PMCs are the smallest in terms of their sheer numbers, yet Combat Offensive PMCs are certainly the most deadly. Combat Offensive PMCs tend to focus on the tactical environment, offering services at the forefront of combat operations and capabilities, engaging in actual fighting or direct control and command of military units, clandestine warfare, basic and advanced battle handling, and sniper operations. Combat Offensive PMCs, then, are able to deploy a military force in an attempt to help their clients maintain or restore political order, military power, or to change the strategic impact of a war.

Clients of Combat Offensive PMCs tend to be Global South governments with comparatively low military capabilities facing immediate, high-threat situations, and Western governments such as the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) in Global South places such as Iraq or Afghanistan. Generally, Global South governments are the ones most in need of military intervention into their conflicts, but are the least able to afford the military services of a PMC. Combat Offensive PMCs such as Executive Outcomes can be defined as PMCs that are essentially a military battalion for hire that are willing to engage in combat operations on behalf of their contracted clients, whether for a multinational company, a non-state actor, or a state, to change the strategic impact of the conflict. One of the best known PMCs that fitted into this category was the South African based PMC Executive Outcomes that performed combat operations in Angola and Sierra Leone. During the Sierra Leone conflict, EO was contracted by the Sierra Leone government to dramatically change the strategic landscape of the war by engaging in combat operations against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) (Reno 1997: 168). Although EO has not traded since 1998, its military operations have been the watershed for Combat Offensive PMCs.

In Sierra Leone, a small player in world political affairs was brought into the international political spotlight during the mid-1990s because of the country's intractable civil war that, at the time, seemed to have no end to hostilities. Specifically, the root of the conflict arose from social and historical cleavages particularly during the colonial and post-colonial periods that culminated in the proliferation of sectarian demands on weak government political machinery (Reno 1997: 168). The conflict within Sierra Leone was also a complex interaction of both internal and external political socio-economic forces. One of the factors for the fighting was the collapse of the patron-client system of politics

that characterised not only Sierra Leone, but many other African states. This collapse turned the state into a region of different regimes with highly personalised rule.

Similar to Angola, elites within Sierra Leone relied on aid and loans from former colonial powers and superpower benefactors to help finance patronage and military aid. However, these resources dried up in the early 1990s. With the weakening of the patron-client system, the Sierra Leone government faced opposition from rebel movements, insurgencies such as the RUF, citizens the state could no longer patronise, and its own military force which Sierra Leone could no longer afford. However, this conflict that raged throughout most of the 1990s in Sierra Leone eventually fell into a category of "new wars" where the struggle was between armed forces that contended for valuable "lootable" natural resources amidst the collapse of state institutions, rather than being a war for a mass-based political movement that promoted any particular vision or ideology.

The civil war which raged throughout Sierra Leone was initiated by Corporal Foday Sankoh who formed the RUF (Francis 1999: 325). The RUF claimed to be representing the population who were impoverished and unrepresented. The reality, however, was that the RUF's objective was to retain their leader's (Foday Sankoh's) control over Sierra Leone's diamond deposits. By 1995, the RUF had control of most of Sierra Leone's countryside which included the control of the diamond mining sites. Most of Sierra Leone's diamond deposits were alluvial, which made this resource extremely difficult to control. The RUF's control over the diamond deposits was a serious concern for the Sierra Leone government as this resource was its principal foreign exchange earner. In essence, the Sierra Leone government needed to defeat the RUF which was in control of the country's natural resources that accounted for 57 per cent of the state's official export earnings (Isenberg 1996: 7). The conflict eventually turned into a war for diamonds, on which both sides were reliant for financing their war efforts. Despite military assistance from Guinea and Nigeria, the poorly trained and underpaid Sierra Leone Military Force was incapable of combating the RUF. Against this background of chronic insecurity the Valentine Strasser government looked for outside intervention from PMCs. The Sierra Leone government initially hired the PMC Ghurkha Security Guards (GSG) in February 1995 led by Robert Mackenzie, who was later captured, tortured and killed, resulting in GSG refusing to take any



further action (O'Brien 1998: 86).

The role of PMCs fighting in Sub-Saharan Africa gained prominence when in 1995 the government of Sierra Leone agreed to hire the PMC Executive Outcomes after the GSG disaster. EO started trading in 1989 as an incorporated company registered in South Africa and in 1993, registered in the tax and secrecy haven of the Bahamas. EO accepted the contract to militarily intervene in Sierra Leone's conflict on behalf of the Valentine Strasser government. EO was contracted to not only provide military training and logistics, but to conduct offensive military operations against the RUF. Between December 1995 and October 1996, EO successfully launched a series of operations that secured Freetown, reoccupied the diamond mining areas (including the rutile mines), and destroyed the RUF strongholds. The strategic impact of EO changed the military balance of power, placing it back in government hands. Once EO recaptured those diamond fields from the RUF, MNCs (particularly mining companies) started to reinvest back into capital intensive mining operations, gambling on the security provided by EO. In return, EO would be paid a monthly stipend of US\$1.225 million from the government (Rubin 1997: 47). This 21 month operation by EO in Sierra Leone cost the government approximately US\$35 million which included payments for arms (Francis 1999: 331; Isenberg 1997: 17). To ensure payment, EO's intervention into Sierra Leone became intricately linked to the re-capture, protection, and exploitation of valuable natural resources. While EO was fulfilling its contractual obligations to the Sierra Leone government, much of the company's military capabilities and personnel were stationed in Kono, the rich diamond mining province approximately 200 miles east from Freetown, no doubt to protect the diamond deposits to ensure payment of the contract. The Sierra Leone government believed that EO could do a better job at bringing an end to the conflict than the Sierra Leone's own military forces and international organisations such as the United Nations (UN).

EO was unrivalled among PMCs. This was because EO had military equipment and personnel at its exclusive disposal. EO had armoured personnel carriers with 30mm cannons, amphibious armoured personnel carriers with mounted 7.62mm machine guns, Land Rovers with anti-aircraft guns, artillery, electronic intercepting systems, Soviet Mi-24 gunships (helicopter), and Soviet Mi-17 helicopters armed with rocket pods (Isenberg 1997: 8). Moreover, EO had its own air force

which contained two Boeing 727 supply planes, two Andover transport planes, Soviet MiG-23 jet fighter-bombers, Swiss Pilatus planes with air-to-surface missiles, and Soviet Mi-8 helicopters.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1997, EO's contract with Sierra Leone was terminated while still being owed US\$19.5million (Francis 1999: 331). One of the preconditions for peace from the RUF was that EO had to leave Sierra Leone. The termination of EO's contract was later seen as a fatal mistake on President Kabbah's part, because there was still continuing instability, some small pockets of fighting, and a possible military *coup* if EO departed before the UN peacekeepers arrived. After EO's termination, President Kabbah's government was overthrown in just four months. In July 1999, the RUF and the Sierra Leone government signed the Lome Peace Accords. However, in May 2000, the RUF violated the peace accord when violence broke out once again, with the rebels still holding some key diamond mining areas. Later, the deposed Sierra Leonean President Ahmed Kabbah hired the PMC Sandline International to train and arm his troops to retake control of the government.

Furthermore, in 1992, during the Angolan conflict, EO was contracted by Gulf Chevron and Sonagol, an Angolan parastatal oil company, to re-secure the Soyo oil fields and to protect the computerised pumping stations owned by Chevron, Petrangol, Texaco, and Elf-Fina-Gulf. This resulted in the Angolan government contracting EO in 1993 for US\$40 million to train the Angolan military forces and to engage direct combat operations against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) (Foreign Commonwealth Office 2001: 11). This contract was renewed every year until 1996. The influence of EO proved instrumental in recapturing N'taladonda that helped to change the whole course of the Angolan War. EO personnel recaptured (again) the diamond mining areas of Cafuno and the oil installations in Soyo in 1994. EO's military operations in Angola played a key and influential role in the transformation of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) Angolan army into an effective fighting force against the insurgency group UNITA. EO personnel trained the Angolan armed forces (FAA) in military tactics such as motorised infantry, artillery, engineering, signals, medical support, sabotage, and reconnaissance while at the same time it engaged UNITA in combat (Howe 2001: 199). EO's employees also flew the Angolan air force aircraft and launched commando raids against UNITA headquarters.

During EO's time in Angola, more than 1 400 personnel were on active duty during the PMC's contracts. In Angola, EO's contracts in 1993 were worth US\$40 million, US\$95 million in 1994, and between 1995 until late 1996 EO was paid US\$1.8 million per month (O'Brien 2000: 52). When EO left, Saracen International was then employed by Elf-Fina Gulf for US\$10 million over three years to protect their petroleum installations. To fill the void left by EO, a PMC called Lifeguard Security was formed by former EO personnel in Angola in 1996 to take over EO's role (O'Brien 2000: 53). Essentially, EO was a pioneer in this Combat Offensive category of PMCs, and during its operations throughout the sub-Saharan African continent during the 1990s, became the market leader within the PMC industry, paving the way for other PMCs to develop and offer more specialised military services other than combat operations. The defunct Sandline International that also contributed to the Sierra Leone conflict similarly, was also contracted by the Papua New Guinea Government to provide a military force only to be later rejected by this government, due to heavy political pressure from the Australian government and the Australian Defence Force (Mandel 2001: 141). Another PMC, International Defence and Security (IDAS), played an instrumental role to the Angolan government in the defence of the state (Singer 2003: 9).

## **4. Combat Defensive PMCs**

The second type of PMC is the Combat Defensive PMC. Combat Defensive PMCs will generally provide military security operations such as protecting or guarding strategic installations, assets, check points, military bases, convoys, military personnel, NGOs, high-end officials, military patrols, or close personal protection in conflict situations. This categorisation perhaps constitutes the most common of all military services on offer by PMCs. Combat Defensive PMCs are defensive in nature, meaning that they will only engage in combat operations when threatened. Nor will Combat Defensive PMCs seek out offensive operations. Nonetheless, Combat Defensive PMCs still contain the immediate proximity for violence. Combat Defensive PMCs have similar military capabilities to Combat Offensive PMCs in terms of weapons and personnel.

Combat Defensive PMCs that provide military security services are arguably the most controversial current actors within the PMC

industry, particularly with the actions of Blackwater USA during the 2003 Iraq War. Not only do NGOs, the UN, INGOs, governments, peace-keeping organisations, or regional organisations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and conflict ridden Global South countries employ these Combat Defensive PMCs, but other clients that use Combat Defensive PMCs include energy and mining companies, and telecommunications companies such as television stations for their journalists. For these companies, this type of business network with PMCs provides an effective way of managing their political risks abroad. British Petroleum (BP) in 1992, for instance, employed the PMC DSL to run its military security operations in Colombia. In doing so, DSL set up a subsidiary called Defence Services Colombia (DSC). DSC coordinated all of BP's defence capabilities in the Casanere oil fields, a conflict zone where one of Colombia's strongest insurgency groups, the Castroite National Liberation Army (ELN), is stationed (Vines 2000: 186). While contracted with BP, DSC trained the Colombian police in counter-insurgency manoeuvres. At the same time, DSC personnel wore Colombian police uniforms, therefore being able to engage in operations against those insurgent groups that targeted BP oil installations. In Iraq, Aegis Defence Services coordinated all PMC operations on behalf of the US military. Another example was where the Sri Lankan government in 2001 was recommended to contact the PMC Trident Maritime to carry out a military security audit survey in conjunction with the PMC Rubicon which was providing military security for the Sri Lankan government. This recommendation came about because the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelan had made a devastating attack in July 2001, destroying the Banderonaike international airport in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo. This attack resulted in half the civilian fleet of Sri Lankan Airlines (their national carrier) being destroyed, with almost one third of the Sri Lankan Air Force assets also destroyed.

One of the best PMCs that fitted into this category of Combat Defensive PMCs was the extremely controversial US based PMC Blackwater USA that rose to prominence during the 2003 Iraq War. Founded in 1997 by former US Navy Seal Erik Prince, the eventual evolution of Blackwater USA provided military security for both government and corporate endeavours worldwide, and personal security detachments to military and diplomatic missions. Blackwater USA won its first security contract in April 2002 for six months valued at US\$5.4 million by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to provide personnel



protection to the CIA stationed in Kabul, Afghanistan (Pelton 2006: 37; Scahill 2007: 41). By early 2003, Blackwater USA was uniquely poised to win even more security contracts with the advent of the 2003 Iraq War.

Blackwater's primary mission during the 2003 Iraq War was to provide military security. Having obtained some of the earliest contracts in the Iraq War, Blackwater USA was given the task of military security for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that governed Iraq in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq War. (Scahill 2007: 269-272). On 28 August 2003 Blackwater USA was awarded a no bid "sole source" contract to provide military security for the CPA at a cost of US\$27 million (Scahill 2007: 69). This provided the CPA with a team of 36 protection specialists, two K-9 teams, and three MD-530 Boeing helicopters known as "little birds". Most of these contracts to Blackwater USA came from the DoS Worldwide Personal Protective Services Contract where by the end of 2004, the PMC had won more than US\$1 billion in federal contracts to Iraq (Scahill 2007: 216-217).

One of the major incidents that highlight a Combat Defensive PMC engaging in combat was when Blackwater USA was ambushed in Fallujah in March 2004 by Sunni insurgents. Four men on security detail transporting food service equipment across the city of Fallujah were ambushed in a coordinated assault. The convoy was shelled with rocket propelled grenades, then attacked with small arms fire and a fire-fight ensued (McCallum 2007: 59; Private Military Companies in Iraq 2007: 4). Another example where Blackwater USA engaged in a fire-fight was in the city of Najaf in August 2004 where Blackwater employees, Salvadorian Peacekeepers, and US Marines took part in a four hour battle against the Shi'a uprising under Moqtada al Sadr to protect a US army installation. During this battle, contractors made numerous attempts to contact US Armed Forces for intervention, while Blackwater USA "little birds" flew to pick up wounded and drop off more ammunition. With Blackwater personnel engaging in combat, the actions of Blackwater USA personnel increased the company's credibility and perception that Blackwater could meet its security contracts regardless of the physical dangers.

On the same day, the PMCs Hart Group, Control Risks, and Triple Canopy were all involved in battles as a result of being in security detail. In the city of Kut, personnel from Triple Canopy engaged in a fire-fight to ensure protection of civilian personnel for over three days until



ammunition shortages forced a risky retreat to the Kut airfield for evacuation operated by the PMC Kellog, Brown, and Root (Isenberg 2004: 31). Hart personnel were also surrounded when protecting workers, particularly when coalition forces retreated and left Hart personnel isolated during the battle. The most controversial incident was when on 16 September 2007 Blackwater USA personnel shot and killed 17 Iraqi civilians claiming these people had fired upon their convoy as they were in a hostile zone of Nisoor Square in Baghdad.

## **5. Non-Combat Offensive PMCs**

The third type of PMC is the Non-Combat Offensive PMC such as MPRI. Non-Combat Offensive PMCs provide military support operations such as advising on offensive tactical responses, military advice that covers restructuring the armed forces, advice on equipment purchases, operational planning, to advising on military tactics, and most prominently, military training in the provisions of military skills such as weapons handling, combat manoeuvres, high-technology weapons training, intelligence training, for another country's armed forces in the Global South such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia, Macedonia, Serbia, Indonesia, and including Western countries such as the US and UK. These PMCs that provide Non-Combat Offensive military services have been employed to assist conflict-ridden countries in the developing world such as Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan, or are contracted by Western governments to intervene in the Third World to train their militaries during a conflict, such as MPRI during the Balkans conflict, or MPRI again during the 2003 Iraq War.

Non-Combat Offensive PMCs are concerned with military services that are offensive in nature but within a non-combat context. In other words, Non-Combat Offensive PMCs are essentially concerned with the tactical environment of a conflict or the armed forces that are intended to change the strategic landscape of warfare, but not directly engage in combat operations through the use of weapons. Within Non-Combat Offensive PMCs, the biggest military service these PMCs offer is military training. These PMCs are called non-combat because these companies will minimise their engagement in direct combat operations even to the degree of employing a Combat Offensive or Defensive PMC for protection. Their military services are called offensive because their operations will have a very influential outcome on the strategic

development of conflict. In other words, the military services offered by Non-Combat Offensive PMCs such as military training and advice do not necessarily provide direct military combat operations, but still have an influential and strategic offensive impact on the conflict or the military structure of the client's defence forces. This is because these military services enhance the ability of the state's military and its defence forces to wage war and engage in combat. Britam Defence, for example, offers among other services counter-terrorism and military training which includes Special Forces training. The task of PMCs within this category is to supplement the management and training of their client's military forces, and not to engage in combat. PMCs that offer these types of services can be best described as having a proximate capacity for violence. The term proximate capacity for violence in relation to Non-Combat Offensive PMCs is used to indicate the capacity for playing an instrumental role in the preparation for, or the commission of, armed operations with PMCs being in command of weapons or advising in an exchange of fire.

Nonetheless, Western governments such as the US will use these types of PMCs at times in such a way to ensure the strategic balance of the conflict is shifted towards a government's policy agendas. Moreover, these PMCs also work with Third World conflict-ridden countries to prevent a return to violence or serve as a means to end the violence. One particular PMC, PADCO-AECOM was engaged in Northern Uganda providing military training and direction (Wright and Brooke 2007: 105-110). In 1997, the Israeli PMC Levdan finished a three year contract in Congo-Brazzaville (Zaire), training the national army, and the elite guards, while at the same time protecting the former President, Pascal Lissoula. US based PMC Vinnell Corporation trained approximately 26 000 Saudi Arabian national guards for many years from 1975 (Briody 2003:62). Furthermore, Vinnell trained Chinese nationalists, South Koreans, and South Vietnamese in ordinance equipment, hardware, and combat operations, anything that had to do with running a military force (Briody 2003: 62). The clients that this type of PMC generally attracts are those in the midst of military restructuring, aiming for an advantage in military capabilities, or looking at using the PMC as a force multiplier. The majority of the times, these military services are provided during the actual conflict, or at other times in a post-conflict environment. Like other nation-states that have experienced war (Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Iraq, Iran, Congo, Sudan), most Third

World countries that are trying to rebuild the state, generally have a tendency to suffer from critical capability deficits in areas such as military defence, police, and human security. In 1998 for instance, the government of Equatorial Guinea approached MPRI for help in training and upgrading its armed forces (Dare 2002).

Perhaps the most leading example of a Non-Combat Offensive PMC is MPRI. MPRI is headquartered in the US and lays claim to having the most corporate assemblage of military experts in the world. MPRI primarily provides military training, doctrinal analysis, and war gaming operations in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Middle East (Isenberg 1997: 13). MPRI has won several contracts such as working with the Bosnian Serbs, Taiwanese and Swedish armed forces, and winning the Democracy Transition Program with the Republic of Croatia. MPRI's strongest relationships are with US government agencies such as Department of State, Office of the Secretary of Defence, or the US Army War College to name a few. MPRI have been hired by US agencies such as Material Command, Combined Arms Support Command, Air Defence Artillery Centre, Amor Centre, and Infantry Centre. Furthermore, MPRI includes a unit known as MPRI Ship Analytics that specialises in maritime training and simulation which pays particular attention to the growing concern of piracy in the Malacca Straits (Ortiz 2007: 63).

In 1994 during the Balkan conflict, MPRI was contracted by the Croatian armed forces to design a training program to improve the efficiency, quality, and capabilities of the Croatian army. This resulted in the Croatian army launching an exceptionally successful offensive in 1995 against the Serb-held Krajina region forces named "Operation Storm". The offensive utilised typical US-style operational tactics such as integrated air, artillery and infantry movements, and the use of manoeuvre war-fighting techniques to destroy Serbian command and control networks. The military training and expertise MPRI offered to the successes of the Croatian army highlights the indirect link with military combat (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2001: 8). Moreover, during the Balkans conflict, MPRI won a contract with the Bosnians to train and equip their armed forces. The objective of the contract was for MPRI to integrate and build up the Bosnian Army of Muslims and Croats against the Serbs. In doing so, MPRI ran a school in military doctrine and battlefield simulations, and constructed a large military firing range near Livno in Croat-controlled Western Herzego-

vina. MPRI's contracts can be seen as offensive because MPRI enabled these armed forces to succeed or defend themselves through military training and increase in arms.

Following the Balkans conflicts, MPRI entered the Middle East market with contracts from Saudi Arabia that included threat analysis, military doctrine, staff organisation, force management, force development, and force integration (Singer 2003: 130). MPRI was also active in Kuwait providing military training at company and battalion-task force levels. MPRI also entered the African market; in 1996 it negotiated a contract with the Angolan government to provide military training to its armed forces. Moreover, MPRI also negotiated contracts for the African Crisis Response Initiative, a seven-nation training program established in 1996 to create African peacekeeping units. MPRI supplied administration and military training under the program. MPRI, furthermore, obtained contracts in Nigeria to restructure the Nigerian Armed Forces and to "re-professionalise" the Nigerian military (Singer 2003: 132). During the same period in the 1990s, MPRI began work in Colombia as part of "Plan Colombia", a US\$7.5 million strategy to eradicate the cocaine trade. MRPI was to re-design and help in reforming the Colombian military to suit the counter-narcotic operations. However, the operation then incorporated counter-guerrilla training for the Colombian military. MPRI essentially worked with the Colombian military in the areas of planning, military operations, logistics, intelligence, military training, and staff management.

A fine but very significant line does exist, however, between training a government's military forces and fighting alongside the same armed forces in the name of military training. Non-Combat Offensive PMCs such as MPRI will have a direct strategic influence and impact on the political and military environment of the countries in which these companies operate. Furthermore, most Non-Combat PMCs such as MPRI are not passive in their military training programs. It can be argued that most PMCs now, unlike the Combat Offensive model, usually try to function within a non-combat capacity while trying to maintain the offensive nature of their services.

## **6. Non-Combat Defensive PMCs**

At the end of this spectrum is the Non-Combat Defensive PMC that primarily performs military logistical tasks that are non-lethal in nature.

The PMCs involved in the provision of this type of military services may not themselves have military origins or structure and are generally not involved in the actual fighting. As such, these PMCs would nevertheless be employed to provide some sort of military advantage to the host army such as enabling the release of their own logistical troops to combat operations. Such Non-Combat Defensive PMC would include KBR, formerly known as Brown and Root.

Non-Combat Defensive PMCs provide military services that are non-lethal in nature, but still have a degree of influence within the strategic nature of a conflict. Therefore, Non-Combat Defensive PMCs do not provide a direct potential to exercise combat operations. However, the delivery of their military services still enhances the recipient's military capability. Rather, these logistical military services are more inclined to play a supportive role for the government's militaries. The most common clients this category attracts are states engaged in immediate and long-term military interventions, such as the US in Iraq, or governments that are simply looking to privatise their "non-teeth" military capabilities. Although these PMCs do not participate in the planning or execution of direct combat, these companies provide services that fall within the military sphere that are critical to combat operations whose wide-ranging supportive and logistical services have rendered these PMCs as essential actors in the deployment and maintenance of most Western defence forces in conflict regions such as Iraq, Colombia, the African continent, and Afghanistan. This classification also encompasses PMCs that maintain high-technology weapons and military hardware. Furthermore, Non-Combat Defensive PMCs also include the business of de-mining/explosive ordinance disposal such as BATEC or Ronco.

Most Non-Combat PMCs can be defined as "non-teeth" or "tail-end" aspects of military operations. These services include logistics, transport, medical treatment, sanitation, water treatment, power production, food preparation, humanitarian operations, refugee protection, or administration — in other words, any military services other than the core function of combat. PMCs specialising in these functions cover a vast array of operations ranging from post-conflict reconstruction to heavy lift and aviation, manufacturing of weapons, IT software and hardware, mine clearance action, medical services, communications, warehousing, maintenance services, and unexploded ordinance disposal. Non-Combat Defensive PMCs have provided these types of



military services in a number of Third World countries such as Liberia, Southern Sudan (Darfur), Mozambique, Ethiopia-Eritrea, and have been seen working alongside Combat Offensive PMCs such as PAE flying EO personnel into Angola and Sierra Leone. DynCorp and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE) provided logistical support for UN forces in Sierra Leone. Airscan's air surveillance expertise brought this PMC into Iraq to conduct night air surveillance on oil pipelines and infrastructure. Titan Corporation's five year contract to supply foreign language interpreters for the US military during the Iraq War became the company's biggest single source of revenue.

One such PMC which specialises in these types of logistics services is the Ayr Group. The Ayr group, a PMC situated in Darfur, Sudan, specialises in aviation logistics and has provided support to the African Union (AU) personnel. Ayr Group operates a fleet of aircraft in the Darfur region maintaining a flow of personnel, spare parts, and consumables with the ability to reach difficult places. Up to 2007, the Ayr Group logged over 10 000 hours of flight time, transported some 23 000 passengers including UN personnel, 14 000 tons of cargo, and one million gallons of jet fuel to AU peacekeepers. In 2009, the Ayr Group provided two helicopters for Supreme Foodservices AG. These helicopters directly supported the Supreme food distribution mission to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Non-Combat Defensive PMCs are playing key roles in the Third World where the international community such as the UN or Western governments such as the US are constantly showing increasing support for their logistical military services. In the US for instance, the former G W Bush administration created a framework that bridged PMCs and US military forces known as the United States Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) (Wright and Brooke 2007: 105-110).

Perhaps the best example of a Non-Combat Defensive PMC is KBR. KBR, a division of Halliburton, was originally a domestic construction company for large-scale civil projects, but found the military engineering sector very profitable. KBR have become virtually synonymous with the US armed forces since the end of the Cold War. Since 1992, KBR have deployed personnel to Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Zaire, and Iraq (Singer 2003: 136). KBR is so entrenched in the US armed forces that wherever the US military goes to war, so does KBR. KBR's primary function for the armed forces

globally is logistics such as procurement, maintenance, transportation of military material, facilities management, and personnel. In other words, supporting and supplying the armed forces with "non-teeth" military services. In addition to providing logistical support operations, KBR has performed security surveys and upgrades for over 150 US embassies after the Kenya and Tanzania bombings (Singer 2003: 139).

Some of KBR's operations have been in support of the US armed forces such as Somalia in Operation Rescue Hope. In Somalia, KBR provided transportation and supply lines to feeding the troops. Perhaps the biggest contract KBR was awarded before the 2003 Iraq War was providing logistics to the US forces during the Balkans conflict providing everything from water purification to the means of repatriating bodies (Foreign Commonwealth Office 2001: 8). In particular, KBR provided logistics to US troops during Operation Deny Flight. In 1995, KBR was awarded a US\$546 million contract to provide logistical support for US soldiers participating in NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) peacekeeping mission. Other operations include supporting Operation Support Hope in Rwanda for aiding Rwandan refugees, Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti to pressure Haiti's transition to a civilian government, and Operation Vigilant Warrior in Kuwait for the build-up along the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. In all of these operations, KBR performed logistical support such as engineering, construction, base camp operations, transportation, cargo handling, food services, laundry operations, power generation, refuelling, fire-fighting, and mail delivery.

## **7. Conclusion**

In response to economic pressures since the 1980s, most Western militaries have sought to outsource military services to the private sector. The rising importance of the private sector has transformed the institution of war-fighting in most Western militaries. Paralleling the centralisation of commercial and industrial headquartering, PMCs are mimicking the armed forces that are centralising their commands into unified "joint" headquarters. Moreover, PMCs have embraced network warfare that refers to the dispersal and coordination of military personnel over a non-linear battlespace. Finally, PMCs are offering increasingly diverse military services that are reflected in the different types of PMCs considered.

Although there is a PMC industry, within this industry there are

different markets such as military training, combat operations, military security, or logistics enabling PMCs to vary in their market capitalisation, personnel, history, corporate relationships, and characteristics. PMCs come in all shapes and sizes, but regardless of whether the PMC is an independent service provider, a subsidiary of an MNC or a former military unit forming into a PMC, the vast majority of these PMCs will fall into one of these four categories when exploring the primary service the company provides.

PMCs provide not only combat operations, but also tail end military functions such as logistics, transportation, food services, or humanitarian relief operations. Even though PMCs now dominate the private military scene, this is not to say that mercenaries have disappeared. On the contrary, mercenaries are still part of many conflicts within the Global South, and are still being utilised by the First World to advance foreign policy objectives. However, due to the rise in PMCs operating in conflict ridden Global South states, today's mercenaries have had no choice but to become more highly trained and organised than once was the case throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In other words, today's mercenaries have faced pressure to professionalise to compete within the private military market.

PMCs have the ability to significantly alter the strategic military landscape of a conflict, whether in a combative or non-combative role, often as a national defence force would. As the Serbs, Croatians, Sierra Leoneans (particularly the RUF), and Angolans all learned, the involvement of PMCs in combat or non-combat roles can shift the balance of the conflict with the right conditions. As PMCs become increasingly popular, so too does the danger that their clients such as states will become too dependent on PMC military services. Reliance on PMC military services would mean that an integral part of one's strategic military success will depend on the vulnerability to changes in PMC market forces, costs and incentives.

## Bibliography

- Avant, D (2005), *Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatising Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Briody, D (2003), *The Iron Triangle: Inside the secret world of the Carlyle Group*. New Jersey: Wiley and Son.
- Brooks, D (1999), "The business end of military intelligence; Private military

- companies", *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, Vol 25, No 3, July/September, pp 42-47.
- Dare, S (2002), *The Curious Bands of Oil Diplomacy*, The Centre for Public Integrity. (Available at: <http://projects.publicintegrity.org/bow/report.aspx?aid=151>, accessed 1 September 2009.)
- Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2001), *Private Military Companies: Options for Regulation, HC577*, The Stationary Office, London. (Available at: [www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/mercenaries.0.pdf](http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/mercenaries.0.pdf), accessed: 7 August 2009.)
- Francis, D (1999), "Mercenary Intervention in Sierra Leone: Providing National Security or International Exploitation?", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 20, No 2, pp 319-338.
- Government Accountability Office (2006), "Rebuilding Iraq: Actions needed to improve use of Private Security Providers". (Available at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06865t.pdf>, accessed 27 July 2011.)
- Howe, H (2001), *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Isenberg, D (1997), *Soldiers of Fortune Ltd: A profile of Today's Private Sector Corporate Mercenary Firms*, Centre for Defence Information Monograph, Washington, November.
- Isenberg, D (2004), *Fistful of Contractors: The Case for a pragmatic assessment of Private Military Companies in Iraq*, British American Security Information Council 329, Research Paper No 4, September.
- Keane, T (1999), "The New Mercenaries and the Privatisation of Conflict", *Parameters*, Summer, pp 103-116.
- Mandel, R (2001), "The Privatisation of Security", *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol 28, No 1, pp 129-151.
- McCallum, S (2007), *From Gun to Briefcase: The Rise of the Private Military Firm 1990-2007*, unpublished thesis, Drexel University, Philadelphia.
- O'Brien, K (1998), "Military-Advisory Groups and African Security: Privatised Peacekeeping?", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol 5, No 3, pp 78-105.
- O'Brien, K (2000), "PMCs, Myths and Mercenaries: The Debate on Private Military Companies", *The RUSI Journal*, Vol 145, No 1, pp 59-64.
- O'Brien, K (2000a), "Private Military Companies and African Security 1990-98", in Musah, A and K Fayemi (eds), *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma*. London: Pluto Press.
- O'Brien, K (2007), "What should and what should not be regulated?". in Chesterman, S and C Lehnardt (eds), *From Mercenaries to Market: The Rise and Regulation of Private Military Companies, Ch2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ortiz, C (2007), "The private military company: An entity at the centre of overlapping

- spheres of commercial activity and responsibility", in Jager, T and G Kummel (eds), *Private Military and Security Companies: Chances, Problems, Pitfalls and Prospects*. VS Verlag.
- Pelton, R (2006), *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Private Military Companies in Iraq: An Examination of Blackwater's Action in Fallujah* (2007), Majority Staff, United States House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. (Available at: [www.c-span.org/pdf/blackwater100207.pdf](http://www.c-span.org/pdf/blackwater100207.pdf), accessed 4 April 2011.)
- Reno, W (1997), "African Weak States and Commercial Alliances", *African Affairs*, Vol 96, No 338, April, pp 165-185.
- Rubin, E (1997), "The Case for the Mercenary Army", *Australian Defence Force Journal*, Vol 126, September/October.
- Scahill, J (2007), *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*. New York: Nation Books.
- Securitas Annual Report (2006). (Available at: [http://www.securitas.com/PageFiles/25146/annual\\_report\\_2006\\_eng.pdf](http://www.securitas.com/PageFiles/25146/annual_report_2006_eng.pdf), accessed 27 July 2011.)
- Singer, P W (2001), "Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatised Military Industry and its ramifications for International Security", *International Security*, Vol 26, No 3, pp 186-220.
- Singer, P W (2003), *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Spear, J (2006), *Market Forces: The Political Economy of Private Military Companies*, Fafo Report 531, Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, Oslo.
- Whyte, D (2003), "Lethal Regulation: State-Corporate crime and the United Kingdom government's new mercenaries", *Journal of Law and Society*, Vol 30, No 4, December, pp 575-600.
- Wright, D and J Brooke (2007), "Filling the Void: Contractors as Peacemakers in Africa", *African Security Review*, Vol 16, No 4, pp 105-110.
- Vines, A (2000), "Mercenaries, Human Rights and Legality", in Musah, A and K Fayemi (eds), *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma*. London: Pluto Press.