

SECURITY

If you win the battle to keep the troops in Iraq, but then get forced to withdraw your pet security firm, have you actually won the battle to keep troops in Iraq?

The Iraqi government said Monday that it was pulling the license of an American security firm allegedly involved in the fatal shooting of civilians during an attack on a U.S. State Department motorcade in Baghdad.

[snip]

"We have canceled the license of Blackwater and prevented them from working all over Iraqi territory. We will also refer those involved to Iraqi judicial authorities," Khalaf said.

The spokesman said witness reports pointed to Blackwater involvement but said the shooting was still under investigation. It was not immediately clear if the measure against Blackwater was intended to be temporary or permanent.

I suspect this is not the last we'll hear of this. The US would have a tough time replacing Blackwater immediately for a number of reasons—the contracts have gotten so huge, it'll be hard to ramp up that quickly (though I suppose someone could just sub-contract Blackwater). So this really does endanger the US' ability to run an empire in Iraq.

Furthermore, Blackwater is about as wired in as corrupt Republican companies come—the Prince and DeVos families are important money bags for the GOP and I'm sure they will object to losing their big gravy train. Which is why, I suspect, Blackwater isn't commenting on this yet:

Phone messages left early Monday at the company's office in North Carolina and

with a spokeswoman were not immediately returned.

I suspect they're going to launch a large-scale lobbying effort tomorrow to stay in Iraq.

Which means this may well turn into an issue between Maliki's government and Bush. Kicking out Blackwater is one way for Maliki's government to assert sovereignty in ways that do not require the Democratic party to have a spine. It seems the Iraqi government—and not just Congress and the President—get to have some say over the US empire in Iraq.