

SCAHILL ON THE BLACKWATER RENT-AN- ASSASSIN SERVICE

As expected, Jeremy Scahill has a piece up on the revelation that CIA was using Blackwater as a Rent-an-Assassin service. He corrects the silence about the role of Buzzy Krongard in both the NYT and WaPo pieces on this.

In a 2006 interview for my book, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, Krongard said that the company was hired to provide security for the CIA in Afghanistan. "Blackwater got a contract because they were the first people that could get people on the ground," Krongard said. "The only concern we had was getting the best security for our people. If we thought Martians could provide it, I guess we would have gone after them."

The relationship between Krongard and Prince apparently got chummier after the contract was signed. One former Blackwater executive said in 2006, "Krongard came down and visited Blackwater [at company headquarters in North Carolina], and I had to take his kids around and let them shoot on the firing range a number of times." That visit took place after the CIA contract was signed, according to the former executive, and Krongard "may have come down just to see the company that he had just hired."

And he lists a number of other CIA guys who went on to work for Blackwater. (Sort of makes you wonder how many of those people were used as sources for Finder's propaganda piece yesterday, since a number of them would qualify as "very senior, recently retired CIA officials,

clandestine-service officers.")

Scahill's most important point (one he made with the help of an interview with Jan Schakowsky, who is in charge of this investigation) was that this program—and Cheney's secrecy about it—meant Blackwater was a more integral part in crafting the Bush era counter-terrorism strategy than Congress.

"What we know now, if this is true, is that Blackwater was part of the highest level, the innermost circle strategizing and exercising strategy within the Bush administration," Schakowsky told *The Nation*. "Erik Prince operated at the highest and most secret level of the government. Clearly Prince was more trusted than the US Congress because Vice President Cheney made the decision not to brief Congress. This shows that there was absolutely no space whatsoever between the Bush administration and Blackwater."

Yeah, I can see why that would piss off Congress.