

ERIK PRINCE PROPOSES BLACKWATER BECOME BIG OIL'S ENFORCER

Jeremy Scahill reports on a recording that was liberated from a recent Erik Prince talk in which Prince talks about all the great roles he thinks Blackwater should play in protecting Big Oil. Mind you, he didn't call it Big Oil. But he proposed sending Blackwater to a number of countries to (seemingly) counteract Iran's challenge of Saudi hegemony in the Middle East.

Prince painted a global picture in which Iran is "at the absolute dead center... of badness." The Iranians, he said, "want that nuke so that it is again a Persian Gulf and they very much have an attitude of when Darius ran most of the Middle East back in 1000 BC. That's very much what the Iranians are after." [NOTE: *Darius of Persia actually ruled from 522 BC–486 BC*]. Iran, Prince charged, has a "master plan to stir up and organize a Shia revolt through the whole region." Prince proposed that armed private soldiers from companies like Blackwater be deployed in countries throughout the region to target Iranian influence, specifically in Yemen, Somalia and Saudi Arabia. "The Iranians have a very sinister hand in these places," Prince said. "You're not going to solve it by putting a lot of uniformed soldiers in all these countries. It's way too politically sensitive. The private sector can operate there with a very, very small, very light footprint." In addition to concerns of political expediency, Prince suggested that using private contractors to conduct such operations would be cost-effective. "The overall defense budget is going to have to be cut and they're going to look for

ways, they're going to have to have ways to become more efficient," he said. "And there's a lot of ways that the private sector can operate with a much smaller, much lighter footprint."

In addition to his plot to use Blackwater to counter Iranian power, Prince also called to send Blackwater to Nigeria, in what would amount to propping up a corrupt (but US-friendly) government to beat back the indigenous opposition to the abuse, environmental degradation, and corruption related with the oil industry in that country.

Prince also proposed using private armed contractors in the oil-rich African nation of Nigeria. Prince said that guerilla groups in the country are dramatically slowing oil production and extraction and stealing oil. "There's more than a half million barrels a day stolen there, which is stolen and organized by very large criminal syndicates. There's even some evidence it's going to fund terrorist organizations," Prince alleged. "These guerilla groups attack the pipeline, attack the pump house to knock it offline, which makes the pressure of the pipeline go soft. they cut that pipeline and they weld in their own patch with their own valves and they back a barge up into it. Ten thousand barrels at a time, take that oil, drive that 10,000 barrels out to sea and at \$80 a barrel, that's \$800,000. That's not a bad take for organized crime." Prince made no mention of the nonviolent indigenous opposition to oil extraction and pollution, nor did he mention the notorious human rights abuses connected to multinational oil corporations in Nigeria that have sparked much of the resistance.

Scahill doesn't say it explicitly (nor did Prince), but this amounts to a plan to use mercenaries to shore up the hegemonic system the US build on big oil.

Scahill describes a lot more of Prince's braggadocio in his post. But I, for one, am particularly intrigued by Prince's naked aspirations to become Big Oil's privatized enforcer.