

U.S. State Department Dropped Blackwater Probe After Manager Threatened to Kill Investigators



Washington, June 30 (RHC)-- The U.S. State Department abandoned a probe of the private military firm Blackwater in Iraq after a company official threatened to kill the government's chief investigator.

The New York Times reports investigators began looking into Blackwater's Iraq operations just weeks before company operatives shot dead 17 Iraqi civilians in the 2007 massacre at Baghdad's Nisour Square. The investigators found widespread misconduct and warned of a "environment full of liability and negligence."

But according to government documents, the previously undisclosed investigation was quashed after Blackwater's project manager in Iraq, Daniel Carroll, issued a threat "that he could kill" the chief investigator, Jean Richter, and "no one could or would do anything about it as we were in Iraq."

The U.S. embassy in Iraq ended up siding with Blackwater, ordering Richter and a colleague to leave the country and calling them "unsustainably disruptive" and "unnecessarily hostile" to "contract personnel."

The New York Times says the investigators' unheeded warnings "make clear that the [State] Department was alerted to serious problems involving Blackwater and its government overseers before Nisour Square." The trial of four Blackwater operatives accused in the massacre began this month after years of delay.

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