

Report reveals U.S. mercenary firms to take charge of key Gaza checkpoints

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Tel Aviv, January 24 (RHC)-- U.S. "private security" contractors will deploy armed guards to Gaza and inspect vehicles of Palestinians returning to their homes in the north via an Israeli-installed checkpoint that divides the strip into two parts, a report says.

Citing two Israeli officials and a source with direct knowledge, Axios reported that the planned deployment is expected to start in the coming days. The two U.S. companies, Safe Reach Solutions (SRS) and UG

Solutions, will operate a checkpoint on the Netzarim corridor, a key road south of Gaza City.

Israeli forces set up the Netzarim corridor, which divides the Gaza Strip into two halves, during its genocide war on the strip to prevent displaced Palestinians from returning to the northern part.

The deployment was negotiated as part of the ceasefire agreement, brokered by the United States, Egypt and Qatar, between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas. It aimed to solve a key sticking point around the movement of displaced Palestinians back to northern Gaza.

"The consortium's role is to oversee, manage, and secure a critical vehicle checkpoint along Salah al-Din Road, facilitating the safe return of displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza. The consortium aims to ensure orderly vehicle movement while preventing the transport of weapons northward, in line with the ceasefire terms," a source familiar with the issue claimed.

The U.S. contractors (read: mercenaries) are expected to remain in Gaza until the end of the first phase of the deal, which took effect on Sunday. According to the agreement, Palestinians displaced to the south could return seven days into the truce.

An Egyptian security company, which has been approved by the Egyptian intelligence service, will also be involved in the checks, a senior Israeli official said. "There may be additional members and nationalities in the future," a source familiar with the issue said.

It will be the first time in decades that U.S. private security companies will operate in Gaza.

American contractors have a dark history of crimes against non-combatants and civilians in war zones.

Four security guards from the private military firm Blackwater received jail sentences for killing 14 civilians, including two children, in Iraq's Baghdad in 2007, a massacre that sparked an international outcry over the use of mercenaries in war. However, they were later pardoned by Donald Trump during his first presidential term in 2020.

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