


OPINION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

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Support our mercenaries

By Chris Brown
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On Tuesday the Iraqi cabinet approved a law that would remove immunity from private military contractors serving protective roles in Iraq – the bill now waits for passage by the Iraqi parliament before it becomes legally binding. It would remove the protection granted by Coalition Provisional Authority director Paul Bremer in the early part of the American occupation citing their importance to the military effort there and the need for them to operate freely. But after the recent killings of Iraqi civilians by Blackwater, one of the many private military contractors employed by the US Government in Iraq, it seems they may have outlasted their utility, if there ever was one.

Beginning in 1994, the State Department began hiring out some of its security detail to private contractors because of security personnel shortages. In the past, the security of diplomats and other State Department Officials had normally been handled by the State Department's own security detachment and the US Marines. However, the US military no longer has the capacity to meet the demand, and after the invasion of Afghanistan the number of hired out contractors increased drastically. Today, there are more private contractors than actual US soldiers fighting in Iraq from more than 100 countries (a true redefinition of the term "coalition of the willing").

The problems caused by Blackwater and the other private military contractors started long before the most recent accusations being leveled against them concerning the death of over 15 unarmed innocent civilians in Baghdad. These contractors hinder the US mission in Iraq, compete with our own military on recruitment and retention of skilled personnel, and represent a dangerous precedent on the monopoly of force usually enjoyed by the state and controlled by Congress.

Private military contractors make the United States' mission in Iraq, and the prospect of success, more difficult. Even though these mercenaries are under contract by the US, they are not held to the same standard of laws and ethics applied to US military personnel. This creates all sorts of difficulties when trying to reign in these trigger happy gunslingers. Last December, one of these contractors got drunk and when he was being hassled by a guard of the Iraqi Vice-President in the Green Zone, the contractor shot the guard at point-blank range. The next morning, the contractor was on a flight home to the United States, no questions asked.

Iraqis do not necessarily distinguish between "official" US military personnel and the contractors hired by the State Department or other private companies when they consider reasons to join terrorists in fighting against the occupation. *US News & World Report* quoted a senior military official "can turn an entire district against us." In the end the US military is forced to pay the price in lives and wasted effort because of the misdeeds of these trigger-happy contractors.

These mercenary companies also present problems to the military when they

try and retain important personnel. In testimony before Congress, Blackwater's CEO Erik Prince said that his company does not actively recruit active-duty military personnel. However, that may not be entirely necessary. Blackwater employees deployed in Iraq can make more in one day than a soldier

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can in one month, while at the same time enjoy tax-free income - many soldiers don't need too much convincing. In order to compete with such a huge pay difference, the Army has been forced to constantly raise its retention and enlistment bonuses, but Lt. Gen. Michael D. Rochelle, the Army's deputy chief of staff for personnel, admitted how difficult it is in a press conference saying (quoted from LA Times) "It's almost impossible to be fully competitive."

Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice deserve some credit for stepping up and taking action to limit the freedom and gain some more oversight of these mercenaries. They announced on Tuesday that all State Department convoys will now fall under military control, meaning that companies like Blackwater have to notify and gain approval from military officials before taking action. Congress has also stepped in. A number of hearings have been scheduled and the House of Representatives passed the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act that



Our country, and the entire international community, cannot stand by as a terror-supporting state fulfills its grandest ambitions.

Frank Weltner

I'm just here for the food

By Evan Koser
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People are fast where I come from. Not necessarily my hometown, but that general area; and actually, just the hundred or so people I associated with. And I don't mean fast like the more conventional definition. I'm talking 16th and 17th century fast. Sexually fast, loose, promiscuous.

I'm not saying that everyone just slept with everyone else either, because that's not true. They definitely weren't afraid to take chances or make risqué decisions. What I'm trying to get at here is that, thus far, many students here at Behrend seem to be insanely introverted. This isn't really a problem (well, for someone as flirtatious as myself, I suppose it is), and there's nothing wrong with keeping to yourself, or having a significant other, but the other side of the playing field can be fine too. Why is it this way? I've been considering a few different ideas: perhaps I'm just a horny, unscrupulous incubus; perhaps everyone else just has higher standards than me; or maybe it's that everyone is just afraid to be more expressive of their inhibitions.

I'm no philosopher, but from my understanding and observations, isn't college supposed to be a sexual buffet? A place where one moves on from the tensions of high school and, sometimes literally, lets loose and goes wild. Maybe my mind is polluted with too many college party movies (*American Pie 2* and *Animal House* especially come to mind), but that's how I see college: like a tempting sexual buffet full of so many opportunities for a new meal. This isn't just from a man's perspective either: I know for a fact there are women out there who enjoy a new flavor every once in a while as well. I've met a few of them. We've even gone out to dinner.

I know this is a totally different era, but take the 80s for example: everyone was licentious then. No one was condoning it either: it's not like it was taught in schools to be sexually active. Well, okay, maybe there were a few people who turned their respective cheeks. Mostly the hair bands, but that's okay. People liked that, and they liked freeing their deepest desires. AC/DC, Motley Crue, Def Leppard, Poison, the list goes on. All these bands taught the youth that one thing was "A-okay:" being sexually free.

Now there's no reason college can't be treated like a sexual buffet. Maybe one day you're hungry for grilled chicken and

potatoes, but the next day you want fettuccini alfredo, or chow mein, or bratwurst and sauerkraut. There's so much to choose from, why would one want to stick with one meal so early on?! Students have the rest of their lives to find a dish and eat the leftovers day after day, so why not enjoy the four years of sexual freedom while one still has the chance?

I'm not trying to condone sex or licentiousness, and I hope I'm not offending anyone in stating that there's no big deal about it; but if a student does choose to follow the ideology of the sexually tense college student, be careful in your decisions. Know that this campus offers an array of contraceptives: birth control, condoms, Plan B, and the most effective of all, abstinence. To be honest, I'd rather everyone not run around and sleep with each other; I like the clean environment. But what's the harm in some tasty new meal or dessert once in a while? Ladies, shake the men "all night long." Fellas, her lips aren't always "venomous poison."

Quote of the Week

"Russia does not need to invite an army of observers because the Russian electoral system is one of the most advanced in the world."

- Igor Borisov, an official of Russia's Central Election Commission, commenting on the decision to limit the number of electoral observers in Russian elections to 70, down from 400

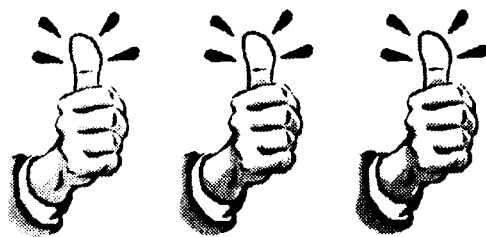


America's Next Top Bumper Sticker

Chris Brown

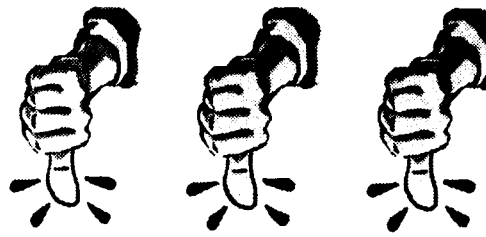
would bring contractors liable under military law. However, the long term effect of our military's reliance on these contractors remains to be seen. These important questions now being raised by Congress and government officials are in many ways too little too late because our reliance on them has grown so enormously. Only now, with a Democratic Congress and a new Secretary of Defense, are the effects and problems finally being addressed.

Beacon Thumbs Up



- ASA Blood Drive
- Upcoming elections
- Clarks concert
- Cheesecake

Beacon Thumbs Down



- Winter driving approaching
- Texting in class
- Homework
- Diplomats forced to serve in Iraq

Submission Guidelines

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run the submission.

The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Please include your major, faculty, or administration position and semester standing. Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue.

The Behrend Beacon reserves the right to edit any submissions prior to publication.

Please keep complaints as specific as possible. Email submissions to cmb5313@psu.edu or drop them off at the Beacon office.