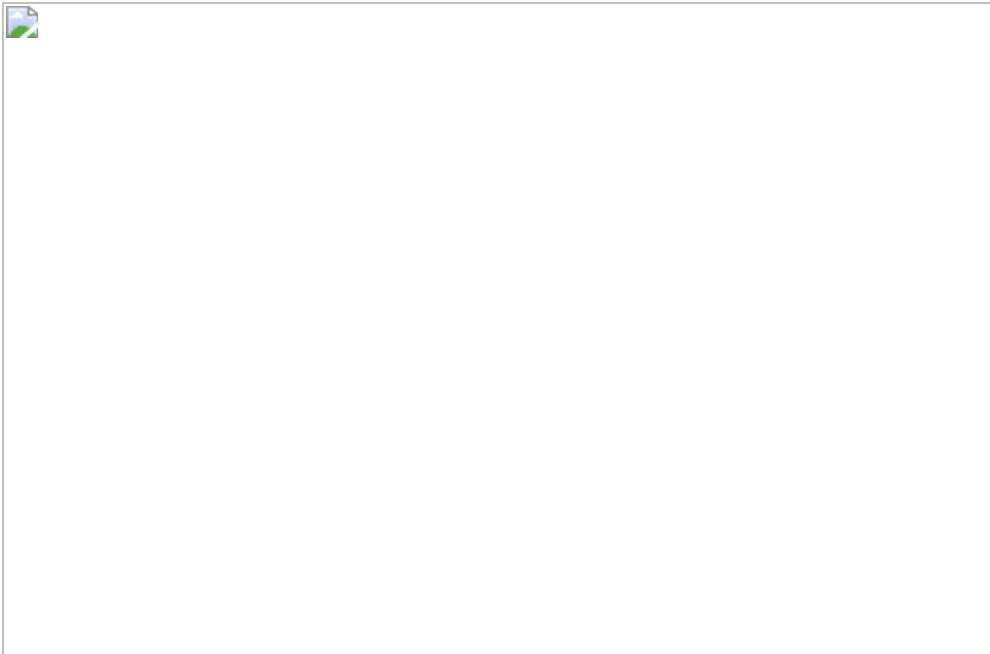


MODERN PRIVATE ARMIES CAN MAKE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN PROFITS

Authored by Ty Joplin via Albawaba.com,

- **Erik Prince is the modern architect of private military firms**
- **His latest venture is in training security personnel in China**
- **But he's been all over the world, outsourcing militaries to cheap labor markets**
- **Al Bawaba has provided a partial map to track Erik Prince's activities over the years**



Erik Prince, the brain behind the infamous private military firm Blackwater, is now in China training security forces.

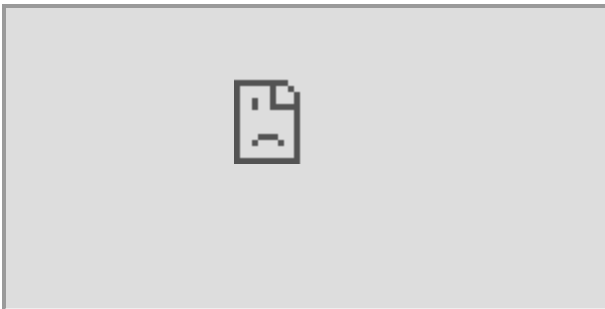
Prince is partially responsible for modernizing the private army for the post 9/11 world, outsourcing militaries to cheap, specialized labor

pools and skirting traditional regulations meant to ensure accountability for armed forces.

His journey from hiring mercenaries to help bolster the U.S. occupation in Iraq to China is long, dizzying and includes stops around the world to train Colombian mercenaries to help make a private army for the U.A.E. and outfitting crop duster planes with missiles to be fired at Armenians.

He has become a global figure, roaming between conflicts zones to sell various governments his expertise on private armies.

To document his journey thus far, Al Bawaba has compiled a partial list of countries/regions in or for which he has done business.



UNITED STATES

Prince's trip around the world starts in the United States.

Born in an affluent Michigan family, his family maintained deep ties to the Republican establishment and several conservative, religious organizations like American Values. His sister, Betsy DeVos, married into one of the most influence political families in the Midwest, the DeVos's, and began helping to run the Republican party machine in Michigan.

That marriage, which tied the Prince and DeVos family together, has given Erik unprecedented political access into the federal government. His list of close allies including Steve Bannon, U.S. President Donald Trump's former chief strategist. His sister gives him a direct line of access to Trump himself.

Erik became a Navy SEAL and then established his own private military firm in 1997, Blackwater.

Once the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, Blackwater received billions in contracts from the U.S. government to help supplement the official mission with private boots on the ground, relatively free from accountability or laws from any particular government.

IRAQ



Damaged and bloodied car in Nissour Square, Iraq, 2007 after the Blackwater massacre (AFP/FILE)

Blackwater's activities in Iraq are infamous and account for Prince's self-imposed exile from the United States.

Apart from harassing Iraqi civilians and running them off of roads with their armored personnel carriers, they also indiscriminately gunned down 14 innocent people in Baghdad in 2007, drawing an investigation and heavy criticism from media outlets around the world.

The incident stands as a cautionary tale for when mercenary groups such as Blackwater are able to operate without sufficient legal or logistical oversight. Facing a wave of scrutiny, Prince left Blackwater and the firm changed its name twice (to Xe and then Academi) to escape the heat.

Many thought they had seen the end of Erik Prince, but he resurfaced later at the helm of a different private military company.

U.A.E.



A satellite image of the camp in the U.A.E. built to train Prince's 800-member mercenary battalion (Google Earth/New York Times)

In 2011, Erik Prince was appointed by the crown prince of Abu Dhabi to make a secret, private army. For this, he was paid \$529 million.

In **documents** obtained by the New York Times, the mission of this privately commissioned battalion included “intelligence gathering, urban combat, the securing of nuclear and radioactive materials, humanitarian missions and special operations ‘to destroy enemy personnel and equipment,’ and crown-control.

Prince hired Colombians and nationals of other countries thousands of miles away to fill his ranks from two reasons. First, Prince was looking to pay them as little as possible. Second, they weren’t Muslims. Prince surmised that Muslims could not be trusted to kill other Muslims.

A few years later in 2015, Saudi Arabia began its military intervention in Yemen and recruited a host of other Arab nations to join its coalition. Abu Dhabi’s crown prince, business partner to Erik Prince, Sheik Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, signed up for the cause in order to destroy any creeping Iranian influence in the war-torn nation.

YEMEN

Erik Prince and his U.A.E. private military firm helped recruit and train over 1,000 soldiers from Latin American countries. Then, their bodies started appearing on battlefields in Yemen.

A single missile reportedly killed 45 mercenaries from the U.A.E.

Prince's initial battalion of 800 soldiers had blossomed into almost 2,000 specialized troops hired mostly from Latin America to do the U.A.E.'s business.

Although officials say Erik Prince's formal business role with the U.A.E. had ended several years before the intervention into Yemen, his corporate blueprint to partially outsource the U.A.E.'s military is doubtlessly still in use.

The U.A.E. keeping and even expanding Prince's blueprint for a private, outsourced army demonstrates just how influential he and his mercenary business model has become.

AZERBAIJAN



A militarily-modified crop duster, called the T-Bird (LASA Engineering)

After his stint in the U.A.E., Prince began doing more business with Chinese executives at the Frontier Services Group (FSG), which he heads.

On this new enterprise, Prince **said** it “is not a patriotic endeavor,” rather, it is intended “to build a great business and make some money doing it.”

Interestingly enough, Prince’s business with FSG took him to Azerbaijan, where he was paid by the government to help it deal with its Armenian problem. Armenians are concentrated into Azerbaijan’s Nagorno-Karabakh region, which seceded from Azerbaijan and formed a semi-recognized, de facto state.

Azerbaijan called on Erik Prince and FSG to help it keep watch on the Nagorno-Karabakh region, also called the Republic of Artsakh. In response, Prince wanted to show the government two crop duster planes meant for agricultural use but refitted for military purposes. The planes were meant to be outfitted with state-of-the-art surveillance technology and were supposedly able to fire missiles.

They never made it to Azerbaijan after an investigation shut the sale down.

This is because the deal may have broken several laws. The Washington Post **found** that “executives were concerned that the company might be skirting U.S. law — known as International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) — requiring Americans to obtain special permits before defense-related technology can be transferred to foreign countries.”

In response to this controversial arms trade, all but two Americans on the FSG executive board quit due to concerns that he was not serving U.S. interests. This has freed Prince to deal more closely with the Chinese.

EASTERN AFRICA



FSG's 'focus region' (Frontier Services Group)

FSG's public focus is on providing security and logistical help to eastern African countries such as South Sudan, Kenya, Somalia and the DRC.

“When you want logistics done in Africa, you call DHL,” said Sean McFate, a former military contractor in Africa and current expert on mercenaries at the Atlantic Council. “When you want muscle, you call Erik Prince.”

One of FSG's ventures appears to help oust the extremist militant group, Al Shabaab, from southwest Somalia—an area it has largely controlled for years. “We have brought together strong international business leaders to team-up with talented Somali entrepreneurs to make development in South West Somalia a reality,” an FSG statement reads.

“The project will include an integrated solution of air-land-sea logistics capabilities and advanced security management.”

CHINA

FSG's headquarters is in Hong Kong, and though it publicly states that its focus is on eastern Africa, FSG is now reported to be doing domestic work on behalf of the Chinese government.

FSG is partially owned by CITIC, a Chinese-government own investment firm. CITIC is slowly taking more and more control of FSG and is reportedly already the dominant shareholder, meaning it has greater power than Prince to determine the company's vision and business deals.

"The Chinese are gradually taking more control" of the company. CITIC is now playing a larger role as Frontier's dominant shareholder, said Xin who heads the International Security Defense College that trains security personnel and is overseen by FSG.

"Prince's share is decreasing. The Chinese are in charge, so it won't matter."

One of FSG's most recent missions has been to train thousands of security personnel in China's northwest Xinjiang province, where millions of ethnically Turkic Muslims called Uyghurs live.

Uyghurs are routinely targeted by the state due to continuous attempts by some to break away from China and form an independent state.

Thousands of Uyghurs are part of an extremist group called the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), whose leaders are hiding in Pakistan and whose members have a heavy presence in Syria fighting against the Syrian regime.

Human Rights Watch **accused** the Chinese government of "deploying a predictive policing program," using massive surveillance technology and a web of high-tech surveillance cameras and compulsory data collection.

They've also reportedly sent thousands of Uyghurs to Chinese 're-education' camps.

THE MERCENARY PRINCE



Erik Prince (AFP/FILE)

This list only details a few of Erik Prince's ventures, and does not include an attempt by Prince to send thousands of mercenaries into Afghanistan and reform the political structure of the entire country to **essentially be a colony for the United States.**

However, Prince has transformed battlefields everywhere and fundamentally altered the way governments construct security apparatuses.

Iran is heavily reliant on outsourced Afghani mercenaries to be cannon fodder in the war in Syria. Russia is supplementing its own intervention into Syria with mercenaries hired by the state-backed Wagner Group who also sends troops to Ukraine. To beat back the nascent extremist group Boko Haram, Nigeria hired private, Apartheid-era security forces from South Africa to do the job.

Thanks to Erik Prince, outsourcing military and intelligence labor is now the norm.

Currently Prince appears to be under investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, thanks to meetings he had arranged with a close aide to Russia's President Vladimir Putin, Kirill Dmitriev in the Seychelles Islands, a place its own government explains is "the kind of place where you can have a good time away from the media." The meeting was allegedly to set up a backchannel between Trump and Russia in order to facilitate clandestine communications.

McFate told Al Bawaba that Prince's use of mercenaries allows countries to enter into and escalate conflicts without having to report it to their citizens; his tactic gives governments "plausible deniability" to anything that the mercenaries do.

According to Dr. P.J. Brendese, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and expert on democratic accountability, ***private military firms "have greater independence to exercise their own prerogatives and 'we the people' don't get a say. That's the most dangerous thing, because they're profiting--their motivation is not God and country; their motive is money."***