

Private security firms to lose immunity

by UPI

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi government moved Friday to lift the immunity granted to private foreign security firms under a law approved by the temporary coalition authority. The move means the foreign firms along with their guards, property and money will now be subject to Iraqi laws and can be tried in the country's courts, Alsumaria reports. The government's decision to remove immunity follows several incidents involving civilians, including one where guards of the U.S.-based Blackwater security contractor opened fire in Baghdad's Al Noursour Square killing 17 people. Iraq's minister for parliament affairs confirmed to Alsumaria that the Iraqi Cabinet approved cancellation of the immunity and passed it onto parliament, calling for quick action. In a related matter, the U.S. State Department and the Pentagon have signed a pact defining new rules for private security contractors charged with protecting diplomats. The agreement gives private guards the right to use deadly force to defend themselves or others when they have reason to believe their face imminent risk of death or serious harm.

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