

In Iraq, U.S. contractors outnumber troops

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Private contractors outnumber U.S. troops in Iraq, The Los Angeles Times reported Wednesday.

The newspaper said more than 180,000 civilians are being paid by the United States to work in Iraq. There are about 160,000 U.S. combat troops currently in Iraq.

"These numbers are big," Peter Singer, a Brookings Institution scholar, told the Times. "They illustrate better than anything that we went in without enough troops. This is not the coalition of the willing. It's the coalition of the billing."

Figures from the Pentagon and U.S. State Department show that at least 118,000 Iraqis, 21,000 Americans and 43,000 foreign contractors are on the U.S. payroll in Iraq, the Times reported.

The contractors' jobs include construction, security and weapons system maintenance, the newspaper said.

"The only reason we have contractors is to support the war fighter," Gary Motsek, the assistant deputy undersecretary of defense who oversees contractors, told the Times. "Fundamentally, they're supporting the mission as required."

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