

## Blackwater clouds private security future

*by UPI*

WASHINGTON -- Rival U.S. private security firms are watching to see if Blackwater's troubles in Iraq mean boom or bust for their futures. Blackwater guards are being investigated for a Sept. 16 shooting incident that left more than a dozen dead in Baghdad. The U.S. Congress is considering making all private contractors in combat zones subject to prosecution and the U.S. State Department is tightening oversight of diplomatic convoys escorted by private contractors, The Washington Post reported Monday. The government's response will shape the future of private security, especially in combat zones, said Steven L. Schooner, co-director of the government procurement law program at George Washington University. The Blackwater incident may be the "straw that broke the camel's back on the government's increased reliance on private security," he told the Post. On the other hand, if the government decides to fire Blackwater, rival security firms "are going to get the exact same work and probably hire the same people," he said.

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