

“HE IS HOPING TO BUILD AN EMPIRE IN THE DESERT, FAR FROM THE TRIAL LAWYERS” TO TRAIN ANTI-IRANIAN SOLDIERS

The NYT has a story on how Erik Prince’s latest scam—to hide from the trial lawyers—involves using retired US servicemen to train Colombian mercenaries to “defend” the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Prince, who resettled here last year after his security business faced mounting legal problems in the United States, was hired by the crown prince of Abu Dhabi to put together an 800-member battalion of foreign troops for the U.A.E., according to former employees on the project, American officials and corporate documents obtained by The New York Times.

The force is intended to conduct special operations missions inside and outside the country, defend oil pipelines and skyscrapers from terrorist attacks and put down internal revolts, the documents show. Such troops could be deployed if the Emirates faced unrest or were challenged by pro-democracy demonstrations in its crowded labor camps or democracy protests like those sweeping the Arab world this year.

And Erik Prince said he resettled to UAE because of the churches!

Given Prince’s happiness about the legal climate in UAE you’d think he’d be able to wander publicly. But he appears to be exercising the

same kind of tradecraft that Osama bin Laden did to evade spies in recent years.

To keep a low profile, Mr. Prince rarely visited the camp or a cluster of luxury villas near the Abu Dhabi airport, where R2 executives and Emirati military officers fine-tune the training schedules and arrange weapons deliveries for the battalion, former employees said. He would show up, they said, in an office suite at the DAS Tower – a skyscraper just steps from Abu Dhabi's Corniche beach, where sunbathers lounge as cigarette boats and water scooters whiz by. Staff members there manage a number of companies that the former employees say are carrying out secret work for the Emirati government.

But ultimately, this seems to be about Iran.

The U.A.E.'s rulers, viewing their own military as inadequate, also hope that the troops could blunt the regional aggression of Iran, the country's biggest foe, the former employees said.

[snip]

Although there was no expectation that the mercenary troops would be used for a stealth attack on Iran, Emirati officials talked of using them for a possible maritime and air assault to reclaim a chain of islands, mostly uninhabited, in the Persian Gulf that are the subject of a dispute between Iran and the U.A.E., the former employees said. Iran has sent military forces to at least one of the islands, Abu Musa, and Emirati officials have long been eager to retake the islands and tap their potential oil reserves.

[snip]

Some security consultants believe that

Mr. Prince's efforts to bolster the Emirates' defenses against an Iranian threat might yield some benefits for the American government, which shares the U.A.E.'s concern about creeping Iranian influence in the region.

"As much as Erik Prince is a pariah in the United States, he may be just what the doctor ordered in the U.A.E.," said an American security consultant with knowledge of R2's work.

So, in a bid to avoid America's trial lawyers, Blackwater 3.0 is holed up in UAE training unqualified Colombians so that the Blackwater guys have an excuse to shoot weapons against Iran?

Really?

Is this what we've come to?

Update: I edited this post to cut down on the blockquotes from NYT.