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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

February 25, 2010

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Last fall, the Administration decided to shift responsibility for training the Afghan national police from the Department of State to the Department of Defense.

Recent press reports indicate that the Department of Defense may be preparing to award a contract with a value of as much as \$1.0 billion to Xe Services – the company formerly known as Blackwater – to provide this training. According to these reports, this work would be awarded to Blackwater through a task order under an existing contract of the Counter-Narcoterrorism Technology Program Office (CNTPO) of the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command. I understand that Blackwater is already helping train the Afghan border police under this contract. A potential competitor has filed a bid protest, arguing that training the Afghan national police is outside the scope of the CNTPO contract which, they allege, is limited to counter-drug and counter-narcoterrorism activities.

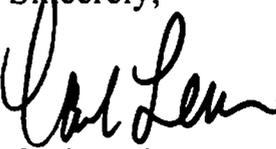
Regardless of the outcome of the protest, I ask that the Department carefully review the decision to award as much as a billion dollars worth of highly sensitive work to Blackwater under a contract vehicle that excludes many potential competitors. As you know, a series of incidents in Iraq, including the tragic shooting incident in Nisour Square, led many to conclude that Blackwater was not a suitable contracting partner for the U.S. government, and contributed to the company's decision to change its name.

Yesterday, following a lengthy investigation, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing on a subcontract awarded to a Blackwater affiliate to

perform weapons training for the Afghan National Army. The hearing and investigation raised a number of very serious questions about Blackwater's conduct. In particular, we received evidence that Blackwater may have: used a front company for the contract; made false official statements and misled Department of Defense officials in its proposal documents; misappropriated government weapons and carried weapons without authorization; and hired unqualified personnel with backgrounds that included assault and battery, larceny and misappropriation of property, insubordinate conduct, and drug and alcohol abuse; and violated CENTCOM's movement control policies. At yesterday's hearing, I indicated that I will be referring the matter of the false official statements to the Department of Justice. The inadequacies in Blackwater's performance appear to have contributed to a shooting incident that has undermined our mission in Afghanistan.

I believe that appropriate officials of the Department of Defense should review the transcript of this hearing and consider the deficiencies in Blackwater's performance under the weapons training contract before a decision is made to award the police training work to Blackwater.

Please let me know how you decide to handle this matter.

Sincerely,

Carl Levin
Chairman