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## Real Stories from Real Americans

### A Plea for Help

Posted by: Spiros D - Baghdad, zz (8/31/2004)

I am a soldier stationed in Iraq concerned about the role of private contractors in this war, and would like to ask for your help. How can you who are way over there help me way over here? Well, let me tell you how.

For those of you not aware, the US military is not the only US organization that is functioning over here in Iraq. A large US contractor called KBR (Kellog, Brown, and Root), a daughter company of Halliburton (once run by VP Dick Cheney), is operating on every US base in Iraq.

KBR manages many of the soldier services that we have here on the base; things like running the food service, waste disposal, pumping the latrines, laundry services, movement and control, and the central distribution center. KBR is also scheduled to take over all fuel hauling and freight hauling in general. When things started to heat up earlier this year KBR put a hold on taking over hauling operations. Now that things are seeming to come back under some control KBR is looking at taking over again.

Now I know you are asking yourself what in the world this has to do with you.

Let me explain... KBR is now requesting, and the army is allowing, US soldiers to ride "shot gun" in KBR convoys hauling KBR goods all over Iraq. KBR is afraid to be out on the roads alone and want our US soldiers to risk their lives riding shot gun for their missions.

KBR is currently staffed by mainly non US international personnel along with a growing number of Iraqis. Most do not speak English, none have had military training on defensive driving, proper convoy operations, avoiding ambushes, navigating around IED's [hidden roadside bombs], proper procedure for calling in support or medivac or fire support, procedures to follow after taking enemy fire, the list goes on. These drivers are simply paid drivers that are making roughly 5 -8 times our wages and get paid whether the freight arrives or not.

KBR is requesting that US soldiers risk their lives at the hands of inexperienced and improperly trained individuals to provide them with security. Now there is no doubt that we need to protect KBR's missions but we have suggested and to date have been denied the opportunity to run the convoys with properly modified and equipped military vehicles.

We have suggested that we run in the convoys with every third vehicle being a US Army gun truck with proper drivers and fire support. With this arrangement KBR can still haul the freight in their vehicles but we would run the mission and deal with any situations as they develop the way we have been trained to. This is the only way that most of us want the missions to be run, the others are just afraid to be opposed to the decisions our leadership is making.

Here is where you come in. Out of a desire to honor the oath we took upon entering the army we do not want to disobey a direct order if and when the order comes for us to ride with KBR. We do however want to make all the lawmakers and politicians aware of the danger we are being unnecessarily exposed to on these missions.

Our hope is that each of our friends and loved ones back home will take a few minutes and send out emails to any local, state, and US congressman and senators and demand that they require the US military to stop this practice of allowing US troops in KBR vehicles.

The only ones who have the power to force the military to honor the wishes of the people are the lawmakers and politicians. So please take a moment and send a letter or email to one of your senators or congressman and ask or demand that they inquire into this matter and demand that it cease.

As of this writing, 3rd Platoon of the 283rd TC (my unit) is currently running these missions. We have been warned that it is only a matter of time and my whole unit will be running these missions. If nothing is done back home then more soldiers

and myself in particular will be placed in unnecessary danger.

Please help.

Thank you for your time and help. I miss you all and look forward to seeing you all again upon my return.

(NOTE: For additional on the ground stories from American servicemen and women, please check out <http://www.optruth.org>)



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Well, the first thing I did after I calmed down a bit was dash off a copy of this to my congressman and to one of my senators (Warner). [Forget Allen as he's a lost cause when it comes to things like this.] Being for or against either the current Administration or the action in Iraq is irrelevant when it comes to the safety of our troops!

Posted by **Edrie I** from **Arlington, VA** on Thursday, September, 02 2004 at 03:07 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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No doubt Edrie!! I agree in full, and I'm going to forward this story to my reps as well. This is the way our democracy needs to work--when something's wrong and our government isn't responding effectively the first thing we can do is bring it to their attention and ask -- directly -- what they're going to do about it. If we don't get a good answer, then it's vote time!! ;-)

Posted by **David M** from **Wallingford, PA** on Thursday, September, 02 2004 at 08:32 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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This is a horrendous turn of events. Why isn't it being covered in the media? I'll write to my senators tomorrow morning.

Posted by **Marcia g** from **new york, NY** on Thursday, September, 02 2004 at 03:13 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Unfortunately, where I live writing a letter to my Senators and Congressman will do no good at all. I'm stuck here in Bush country. But please know our thoughts and prayers are with all of you there. I'll be working my a-- off to get the vote out against the Bush admin. Good luck my friend.

Posted by **Terry N** from **Spicewood, TX** on Thursday, September, 02 2004 at 04:59 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Terry N. in Texas, Please write a letter anyway. How else can we turn the tide? By the way, Charlie Stenholm (D), from your state, is a great Congressman. Sincerely, Darroch

Posted by **Darroch G** from **Los Angeles, CA** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 10:00 AM Respond to comment

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I would like to thank Spiros D. for his illuminating story. That I opposed the war doesn't mean I know the first thing about the what is really happening. Today I know a tiny bit more, and it makes me even more disgusted. I wish all those people with yellow ribbons on their bumpers saying "support our troops" while driving their gas-guzzling SUVs were aware of Spiros D.'s letter. All that those yellow ribbons are saying is that they support Bush, not Spiros D. But cut through Bush's yawp, spin and palaver and lo and behold -- Bush isn't supporting Spiros D. either -- Bush is supporting Kellogg, Brown and Root and their ilk to whom he gave those cushy contracts while Spiros D. gets to take a bullet for them. These kids aren't defending America any more than I am -- they're defending Bush's get-rich-quick pals, and I am incensed that those kids are pawns in this web of official deceit. Meanwhile Bush struts around posing as the Great War President. Disgraceful is too gentle a word for the degree of dissembling and mendacity of this administration. This letter will accompany Spiros D.'s letter to my so-called representatives in the morning.

Posted by **Michael D** from **Portsmouth, NH** on Thursday, September, 02 2004 at 07:01 PM Respond to comment

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There is so much I don't understand about the KBR (Kellogg Brown and Root) role in Iraq, and in our military in general. I just learned today (on Democracy Now) that while Cheney was Secretary of Defense he contracted with KBR to develop a blueprint for how the military might outsource its support activities to private, civilian contractors. What a surprise that KBR/Haliburton should be the very contractor that won the award in Iraq, and what a surprise that Dick Cheney was appointed as CEO of Haliburton in the interim years between Bush administrations - President and CEO even though he had essentially zero private-sector business or management experience at all, having gone straight to federal service in Washington DC after finishing school in 1968. Hmmm. What I find galling and appalling is that it appears that the outsourcing - which I'm sure was justified by arguments that it would be a cost savings - appears to be much more expensive than if these support activities had been provided for by the military. The wages are 5 to 8 times greater than the military staff, and the KBR personnel aren't trained or equipped properly to do the job. It sounds like we're getting far less for our tax dollar through this scheme, and someone (who might that be?) is reaping all the profits. All the while it's leaving our soldiers, like Spiros, at greater risk. It makes me mad. Spiros, I will email my representatives. Thank you for your posting.

Posted by **Laura D** from **Denver, CO** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 12:18 AM Respond to comment

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If Spiros is reading this or if you can contact him, please let him know that I forwarded his story with my support, to US Rep. Mike Capuano (D-Mass.).

Posted by **Henry L** from **Cambridge, MA, MA** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 08:16 AM Respond to comment

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Dear Spiros, I know it's tough accepting the challenge of risking your life for an organization that doesn't care, but hang in there. Keep your chin up and know we all want you to come home. You don't belong there. I've sent your letter to (CA) Senator Barbara Boxer. We'll see what happens.

Posted by **David E** from **Lompoc, CA** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 09:07 AM Respond to comment

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Just letting you know, Spiros, that I wrote to senators Schumer and Clinton this morning. I don't know that it will do any good, but I am furious at how our military is being used while our politicians mouth off about supporting the troops. (I watched the Republican Convention Show last night.) Putting you and soldiers like you in harm's way to protect private contractors making a profit from this war is not showing support for our troops by any stretch of the imagination.

Posted by **Marcia G** from **New York, NY** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 09:09 AM Respond to comment

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I wrote Sen. Bayh and Sen. Lugar of Indiana.

Posted by **Seth S** from **Fort Wayne, IN** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 10:22 AM Respond to comment

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Spiros ... hang in there ... we are all pulling for you ..... even though I live in Oklahoma (also Bush Country) ... I have written to Jim Inhofe and Don Nickles. ~ ~Wishing you a safe and soon return home!!! ~ ~

Posted by **Kitty F** from **Sand Springs, OK** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 10:51 AM Respond to comment

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I forwarded this to my Congresswoman with a request that she do what she can to see that nobody fails to hear the story.

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Posted by **Peter L** from **Denver, CO** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 02:58 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Your story touched mt heart. I have printed it and sent it along with a note to Senator Barbara Boxer. I have also forwarded a link to many on my email list. I will be sending moveon.org an email asking them to please do a petition for this. Even though I do not know you personally, I feel for you an am sending my deepest heartfelt prayers out regularly, and whenever you come into my thoughts during the day. May you be safe and well. Hang in there dear soldier...

Posted by **Jaya F** from **Los Angeles, CA** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 07:55 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Quit whining and suck it up soldier...that's what you get paid to do, do it... (U.S. Army retired)

Posted by **Big M** from **Green Bay, WI** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 08:58 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Hey there tough guy, why don't you re-up and show him how it's done. I'm sure they could use the extra help.

Posted by **David M** from **Cleveland, OH** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 09:55 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Not everyone in WI are idiots... Write G.W. Bush as well. He got us all into this. The lack of preparedness is clear.

Posted by **Darren B** from **Green Bay, WI** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 09:57 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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What are they getting paid to do, exactly? It seems to me like the troops are being ued a Bush's personal money-making war machine like he is some kind of Sultan, talking out of the sides of his mouth to "fool" honest Americans. Maybe the whole army should just disobey direct orders and refuse to fight Bush's private war. And get decent employment - maybe digging the graves for the political careers of Bush and Cheney.

Posted by **Kathy D** from **NYC, NY** on Saturday, September, 04 2004 at 12:58 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Another cheerleader. A cheerleader stands on the sidelines and yells - "Go Get 'Em Boys" but never gets in the trenches to fight. If you believe that this is a war to save America and you're not there fighting (or working for KBR or the USO), then you're a coward. If you believe it's not a war to save America, but you support it anyway, then you're a coward and a hypocrite. So which are you?

Posted by **D N** from **Medford, OR** on Saturday, September, 04 2004 at 05:36 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Spiros: Thanks for telling your story so people back home can help do something about it. I'll post it on my own blog to help spread the word. Of course, I'll be in touch with my congressional delegation. Hang in there, and thank you for your service.

Posted by **Leslie A** from **Central Vermont, VT** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 09:07 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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Spiros D, I have just written the Congresswomen from Washington state. I hope this helps. I believe that the country should keep a sacred oath to the men and women of the armed services to use them wisely and only out of necessity. While I do not support the decision to go to war in Iraq, I support those of you willing to put your trust in your leadership and follow orders to protect the rest of us. Thank you all!

Posted by **Luke W** from **Seattle, WA** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 09:34 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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I'm sending this to the Republican JOKES that represent me in congress. Although, I'm sure Senator Inhoffe is 100% behind this move, I still feel it is my responsibility to say, "I tried" to tell him.

Posted by **Timothy B** from **Jay, OK** on Saturday, September, 04 2004 at 09:47 AM [Respond to comment](#)

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After dashing off or forwarding this letter from Spiros to your local US elected reps, please think about forwarding it to all aspects of the media. The folks that just listen to sound bites on TV or peruse the headlines ought to be immediately appraised of this situation. Perhaps if the media chose to write about this issue, or do a TV news story, the 'average'

American voter who doesn't search the "leftie" websites & doesn't read BUZZFLASH can actually find out what's REALLY going on over in Iraq. "Support the Troops" indeed! I support the US troops as well, but not the US Government's illegal invasion of Iraq. These courageous & dedicated soldiers are not doing the jobs they signed on for... They are being used and abused over there, and not for "Liberty" or to fight "terrorism" or for the "good of the American people" as Bush and his ditto-heads continually claim but reasons less honorable and just. They are there now for the sole good of huge companies making billions on this misery... They are there to insure the profit of Halliburton/Kellog's bottom line. (\*and of course these companies are among those Americans who would agree that US control of the 2nd largest oil reserves in the world is in the best interests of the USA, and "good for America".) Watch your back Spiros, and I hope you get to a much safer post soon. From the looks of things, you or men & women just like you will be revolving in and out of Iraq for many years to come, until enough of you yell "HELL NO! WE WON'T GO".

Posted by **Milena P** from **Vancouver, BC** on Friday, September, 03 2004 at 10:06 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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I'm going to send this to my Senator, Kerry, maybe he can do something!

Posted by **Jim G** from **South Shore, MA** on Saturday, September, 04 2004 at 04:36 PM [Respond to comment](#)

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