

Canadian Forces


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Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): 

Mr. Speaker, the government has never met a job or an industry that it did not want to outsource or privatize, but when it comes to the safety of our dedicated men and women in Afghanistan, one would think it would draw the line. Apparently not.

The government is employing private security companies and hiring cheap labour to protect our bases. Is this the best we can do to protect our soldiers? There is something wrong with this mission if we cannot protect our military bases with our own troops.

Does the [Minister of Defence](#) honestly believe that this is the best way to keep our brave man and women safe?

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Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): 

Mr. Speaker, I could not disagree with the hon. member more. There are no better soldiers in the world than the Canadian Forces.

If he is talking in some vague fashion about using private security contractors in the mission, which all countries are doing, which NATO countries are doing, hiring Afghans, we are working with Afghans to build their security capacity. We are working with operational mentoring liaison teams in both police and army to build their ability to secure their own country. That is exactly what we will continue to do.

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Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): 

Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough for the safety of our troops.

The Bush administration's use of private security contractors in Iraq led to abuses that were severely criticized. The people we have hired here are outside the military chain of command and not subject to our military laws, discipline or justice.

Why is the government using these private companies as cheap labour in the first place? Will the government commit to stop using private security contracts to protect our bases or to carry out military or paramilitary operations in Afghanistan?

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Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): 

Mr. Speaker, I know the member is new to the file but he really should delve into the details of this issue a little further.

Using private security contractors is what all countries have been doing. This is what allows us to help train Afghans to do the type of work that we are doing now. In fact, Canada has been a leader, with other countries, working on the International Committee of the Red Cross to finalize the Montreux document on private and military security companies.

This demonstrates our country's commitment to identify and promote good practices regarding operations of private military security companies. This is exactly what we are there to do, which is to help them do the jobs we do.

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