

Doc. 11337
27 June 2007

Private military and security firms and the erosion of the state monopoly on the use of force

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mr Wodarg and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) resolves to study the problem of the proliferation of private military and security firms with a view to its impact on the state monopoly on the use of force and the erosion of state structures and the potential need for new regulation at the national and/ or international level.

At present there are over one million mercenaries operating around the globe, for more than a thousand companies, creating a turnover of approximately 200 billion US- Dollar last year.

This particular branch of the economy realizes a high level of growth and profitability. The major clients of these operators are governments, followed by multinational industrial corporations, predominantly operating in the exploration of natural resources.

As a result of privatisation, the market for private military and security firms (PMF) boomed during the last decade. Especially "strong" states legitimate the outsourcing of their military capacities to private military operators by cutting costs and their aim to increase the own security standards.

PMF's offer a whole range of services which are generally assigned to national militaries.

The military activities of the PMF's include combat assignments, armed protection services and logistics, including supply and maintenance. Also the PMF's operate in the fields of training, consulting and secret services.

The dependence of regular military forces on the PMF's services increases among both western and third world countries. In some cases the dependence rose so drastically that the regular military forces can no longer fulfil their duty without the support by PMF's.

The outsourcing process causes many problems, which have not yet been reflected in a satisfactory manner. Actions taken by PMF's contribute to the erosion of governmental sovereignty and authority especially in „weak" states. Thus, the precarious public good "security" may be distributed to the disadvantage of big parts of the population and may be only provided to those who can afford private services. This destabilizes the monopoly of law and public order in all countries.

A particularly severe problem from the perspective of PACE is the weakening of parliamentary control and the erosion of the state monopoly on the use of force due to the increasing number of non-governmental actors with military means at their disposal. In consequence there are numerous problems regarding a lack of transparency, and undefined responsibilities for actions taken by PMF's.

This problem has to be regarded thoroughly by the PACE, to analyze possible threats for our democracies.

*Signed*¹:

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¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group