

# DoD tells services to release data on war-zone contractors

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A key Pentagon procurement official has directed several military commands and agencies, as well as each service, to submit reams of data about how they have used private contractors to support ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, a practice lawmakers have slammed after abuses surfaced.

In an April 25 memo, Shay Assad, director of Defense procurement, acquisition policy and strategic sourcing, directs a list of military



Assad

combatant commanders and service purchasing officials to submit to congressional auditors data on "all contracts and/or orders placed against a contract instrument of any kinds,

where contractor personnel perform in ... Iraq or Afghanistan, for a period greater than 14 days; task or delivery orders issued by other government agencies for DoD."

*Defense News*, a sister publication of *Federal Times*, recently obtained a copy of the memo.

Assad's call for data will inform a congressionally ordered Government Accountability Office study on the hot-button issue of the military's use of hundreds of thousands of private contracted personnel to carry out tasks the military lacks the manpower to do. Those jobs range from VIP security to linguists to cooks to intelligence analysts to truck drivers.

As mandated in the 2008 Defense Authorization Act, GAO must deliver the report to Congress by Oct. 1, with follow-on studies due in 2009 and 2010.

Many lawmakers, especially Democrats such as Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., House Oversight and Government Reform Committee chairman, have lambasted Pentagon and administration officials over their management of services contracts and private sector personnel in theater.

"For every taxpayer dollar spent on federal programs, over 40 cents now goes to private contractors. Our government now outsources even the oversight of the outsourcing," Waxman said earlier this year. "What's been missing is a serious evaluation of whether the promises of privatizing are actually realized."

The October GAO report is one in a series of attempts to answer that question.

Many analysts say it likely would take at least a decade to re-

build the federal and Pentagon work force to carry out most of the functions being conducted by contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan. And military officials argue that despite the recently unearthed abuses, they would rather have

contractors doing specific tasks, which frees up uniformed personnel to carry out combat jobs.

The GAO auditors want data on contracts from fiscal 2007 and information from the start of fiscal 2008 through March 31.

Specifically, Assad directed the military commanders and service and agency acquisition officials to turn over:

- The total number and value of contracts and task orders.
- An explanation of the extent to

which services contracts were issued using competitions.

- A description of how many private employees worked on each contract or task order.

- Data on the number of private-sector workers conducting security tasks.

- An accounting of how many contractors have been killed or wounded. ■