

POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL časopisu / URL of the journal: <http://www.fpvmv.umb.sk/politickevedy>

Autor(i) / Author(s): Vaščík Andrej
Článok / Article: Príbeh žoldnierov a súkromných kontraktorov / Story of Mercenaries and Private Contractors
Vydavateľ / Publisher: Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica

Odporúčaná forma citácie článku / Recommended form for quotation of the article:

VAŠČÍK, A. 2012. Story of Mercenaries and Private Contractors. In *Politické vedy*. [online]. Roč. 15, č. 2, 2012. ISSN 1335 – 2741, s. 205 – 211. Dostupné na internete: <http://www.fpvmv.umb.sk/userfiles/file/2_2012/vascik.pdf>.

Poskytnutím svojho príspevku autor(i) súhlasil(i) so zverejnením článku na internetovej stránke časopisu *Politické vedy*. Vydavateľ získal súhlas autora / autorov s publikovaním a distribúciou príspevku v tlačenej i online verzii. V prípade záujmu publikovať článok alebo jeho časť v online i tlačenej podobe, kontaktujte redakčnú radu časopisu: politicke.vedy@umb.sk.

By submitting their contribution the author(s) agreed with the publication of the article on the online page of the journal. The publisher was given the author's / authors' permission to publish and distribute the contribution both in printed and online form. Regarding the interest to publish the article or its part in online or printed form, please contact the editorial board of the journal: politicke.vedy@umb.sk.

STORY OF MERCENARIES AND PRIVATE CONTRACTORS

Andrej Vaščík*

GERAGHTY T.: Žoldáci: Zsvěcený příběh nájemných žoldnéřů. Praha : Naše vojsko, 2010. 403 s. ISBN 978-80-206-1097-3

Tony Geraghty (born in 1932 in Liverpool in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) is former member of the British Special Forces. He was British liaison officer in the US General Staff during the Persian Gulf War in the early 1990s. Afterwards, he made use of his experience in the army and he became journalist. He worked as a reporter directly in the conflict zones in Africa and Middle East. He's also author of many books concerning military issues.

One of his last publications is a book called *Guns for Hire: The Inside Story of Freelance Soldiering* issued in English or *Žoldáci: Zsvěcený příběh nájemných žoldnéřů* published in Czech. The book was published in Czech language in 2010 and is available on the Slovak market too. The topic of the publication concerns the involvement of mercenaries and private contractors in military conflicts since the decolonization period in 1960s till present.

In the first pages of the book, **T. Geraghty** points out that the intention of the publication is not to present a complex list of the conflicts in which contractors and mercenaries have participated. The author prefers to focus on a limited number of the cases when contractors and mercenaries have been involved. The author focuses on cases when the involvement of the contractors had political reasons as well. In regard to the extent of the analysed issue we consider the decision to limit the number of the parsed cases as justifiable. Thanks to the approach that focuses on a limited number of cases there is quite a big space for describing the concrete examples of the involvement of contractors and mercenaries. That is why the conflicts mentioned in the

* Mgr. Andrej Vaščík is PhD. student at Department of Security Studies, Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia and is member of analytical organisation Project ARES (www.projectares.sk), e-mail: andrej.vascik@umb.sk.

publication are not briefly described but provide the reader with a quite detailed analysis of the cases concerning the involvement of contractors in conflict zones.

As for the introduction, the author writes about the main reasons why the contractors were deployed in the crisis regions after the World War II. He also highlights the main problems caused by the involvement of the contractors in military conflicts. Thanks to this introductory part, the reader can realize the general importance of the contractors just since the beginning of the reading. The particular aspects of the contractors' deployment are parsed in detail in the other chapters. The three chapters following the introduction are the main part of the book. They contain the analysis of the particular cases of contractors' involvement in conflict zones after the World War II. The fourth chapter contains overview of various national and international initiatives attempting to empower legal control of the contractors. The final part of the book encompasses the analysis of the economic aspect concerning using of the private military companies (PMCs).

The attention in the first chapter called *Mercenaries* is focused on the mercenaries' activities during the civil wars in Africa in 1960s and 1970s. Those mercenaries were individuals hired mainly by the Western governments during the Cold War. The mercenaries were often hired for toppling legitimate governments with the intention to establish new pro-Western political regime. The author mentions the civil war in Angola as one of the examples of the cases when the US intelligence agency C.I.A. hired French and Portuguese mercenaries. The mercenaries were used for overthrowing the local pro-Soviet government and replacing it with the pro-Western regime.

The oldest kinds of PMCs different from mercenaries were established in the 1970s. By comparison with the mercenaries as individuals, those PMCs were registered companies. Those PMCs offered the services of the soldiers for hire, so-called contractors, to help legitimate governments. The author focused his attention on this issue in the second chapter. In the second chapter **T. Geraghty** focuses his attention on the activities of KMS company as an example of the oldest kind of PMC. Its services were used mainly by the UK and the US government with the intention to easily deny the direct military involvement abroad. That is the reason why the name of the chapter is correctly chosen: *Plausibly Deniable*. The author mentions the situation in Oman in the 1970s in the second chapter. The UK decided not to deploy its regular army in Oman but it made use of the services of KMS. The services of the KMS

contractors were offered for the pro-UK Omani sultan. The KMS contractors helped to train the sultan's military units and empower his government. Thanks to the deployment of the KMS contractors in Oman the UK avoided direct military involvement. Because of that the UK was not accused of interfering in foreign affairs.

Another important issue concerning PMCs is also mentioned in the second chapter. The issue is still discussed and it concerns the participation of PMCs in international peacekeeping operations. **T. Geraghty** mentions the case of Sandline International as an example. It took part in military operations in Sierra Leone in the 1990s. The UK supported pro-UK government fighting against rebels in Sierra Leone during that period. The UK could not directly provide arms to the local government because of the international arms embargo. Thus, the UK decided to make use of the services offered by the Sandline. The company provided arms to the Sierra Leone armed forces and also offered contractors who helped the local government and international African units called ECOMOG to defeat the rebels and stabilize the situation.

As for the second chapter, we must appreciate that author mentions not only positive aspects of the PMCs. He also pinpoints some problems which have occurred because of the PMCs' involvement in the conflict zones. According to the author one of the main problems is insufficient legal control because thanks to the contractors' deployment in conflicts the governments are not so constrained by the international law. The author mentioned the case of Sierra Leone as an example. The UK government used services of Sandline in Sierra Leone to avoid international arms embargo.

The largest part of attention in the book is focused on the conflict in Iraq which began after the invasion of the USA and its allies in 2003. Large part of the third chapter called *Licensed to Kill* is about the conflict in Iraq. We appreciate the author's decision to concentrate his attention mainly on the conflict in Iraq because of various reasons. First, many analyses and studies have been published about the conflict in Iraq after 2003. Second, Iraq after 2003 is one of the conflict zones in which the largest number of contractors has been deployed in history. Moreover, the conflict in Iraq is so-called low intensity conflict, which means intrastate conflict because of ethnical or religious differences. Low intensity conflicts are one of the most frequent types of conflicts in the present world. For these reasons, the reader can receive quite good knowledge about the deployment of contractors in the present conflict zones on the basis of the detailed description of the conflict in Iraq. **T. Geraghty**

describes the reasons why the contractors were deployed in Iraq. He analyzes the security situation after the invasion in 2003. According to the author, the US Department of Defense had underestimated the danger of worsening of the security situation in Iraq after the invasion. That is why the US army did not have sufficient military capabilities. For that reason, the US armed forces were compelled to make use of the services offered by the PMCs, such as providing protection for diplomats, mining facilities, reconstruction workers or convoys. The author mentions positive aspects of using of contractors in Iraq. He parses a case of their involvement in military action in Najaf in 2004 when a few trained and experienced contractors successfully protected the headquarters of international coalition authority against insurgents. We appreciate that at the same time **T. Geraghty** points out that, besides the positive aspects, the involvement of contractors in Iraq has also resulted in negative phenomena. According to the author, the main problem concerning the contractors' deployment in Iraq has been the legal control. Their status was regulated by the so-called CPA Order 17 issued by **P. Bremer**, the head of international coalition authority. On the basis of the order, the contractors accused of committing crime could not be investigated by the Iraqi institutions and the command of international coalition forces de facto ignored accusations against the contractors. According to **T. Geraghty**, the contractors became *licensed to kill*, which is the name of the chapter too. Although they were *licensed to kill*, they were not prosecuted enough because of ineffective legal control. Due to this fact they often abused their obscure legal status and violated regulations, e.g. the contractors directly shot against civilian automobiles, because they could have been suicide bombers, but without warning by shooting in the air. That is the reason why many innocent civilians were often shot. In regard to this issue, there is a record of online discussion on the page 248 of the book. Participants of the discussion were talking about incident during which an Aegis contractor guarding a convoy shot against an automobile without prior warning by shooting in the air. There were some contractors of Aegis among the participants of the online discussion. Some of them advocated the contractor, some condemned him. The published discussion is an interesting part of the book for the reader because he/she can compare many points of view and create his or her own opinion. Moreover, the discussion helps reader to formulate impartial opinion on contractors. The reader can see through the discussion that not all of the contractors abuse the absence of effective legal norms and even many of them advocate the improvement of the legal control of PMCs.

On the basis of the analysis of the situation in Iraq the author points out that one of the most serious problems regarding the use of contractors is the absence of effective legal regulations of their control. As for the fourth chapter called *Regulation*, the author continues to deal with this issue and he mentions various propositions on national and international level aiming at improvement of the legal control of the PMCs. The large part of the chapter is about the political discussions in the UK since 1990s. In this part the author writes why the UK government was not able to adopt effective legal regulations in spite of the discussion. In regard to the international level, **T. Geraghty** focuses his attention on the initiatives of the United Nations. According to the author, one of the most serious problems is a term – mercenary. The author points out that it is not adequate to denote the contractors working for the PMCs as mercenaries. Except for governmental and intergovernmental initiatives, **T. Geraghty** mentions activities of the PMCs themselves as for the legal control, for instance membership in international associations within which the PMCs are forced to adopt codes of conduct. At the same time, the author writes why the international associations are not capable to control the PMCs in an effective way either. We can generally say the fourth chapter contains all important and basic pieces of information for the reader who wants to gain complex knowledge about the main aspects of the legal control of the contractors.

The final part of the book contains information about the economic aspect concerning the use of the PMCs. He mentions main motives why the members of regular armies want to become contractors working for the PMCs. The main reason is the fact the contractors receive higher salary than the regular soldiers. **T. Geraghty** also points out there are risks concerning the issue, he mentions more examples when many regular soldiers finished to work for their national army and became contractors of the PMCs because of higher salaries. In the fourth chapter the author mentions another important aspect concerning the PMCs, i.e. civilian roles such as reconstruction of countries damaged by war, providing military bases with food or technical facilities. KBR is a company which offers services of civilian aspect and the author decided to analyze its activities in more detail. He mentions problems which have arisen in connection to the activities of KBR in Iraq. **T. Geraghty** points out that the leadership of KBR had close relations with US senior politicians thanks to which the company signed all lucrative contracts with the government without public tender. According to the author, many contracts were overcharged and public finances

determined for PMCs were used in an ineffective way. **T. Geraghty** mentions some examples of those overcharged contracts. On the one hand, this part of book is interesting for reader because he can realize the extent of influence of those companies on the national governments and the fact that just financial gains motivate many companies in the field of military service. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out this part is not written in accordance with the rest of the book. The whole book should be focused on the issue of private military contractors and PMCs but this part is immediately about the civilian contractors. For that reason the reader can be confused after reading the final part of the book. He can be confused what terms contractors and PMCs really mean because the author immediately mentions companies offering services of civilian nature. That is why we have to criticize the author because of the absence of the theoretical part in beginning of the book. In this part of the book the author should have clearly defined the terms such as mercenary, contractor and basic distinctions between PMCs offering armed contractors and PMCs offering services of the civilian aspect. These theoretical definitions, which are absent in the book, are necessary for the type of readers, who have limited knowledge about the contractors and the PMCs.

The list of most important PMCs is to be found in the final part of the book called *Appendix: Best of British*, which describes the main activities of the British military companies in the crisis regions, number of their members and financial incomes. The annex offers the complex overview about every important British PMC in the world. Except for the text containing list of the British PMCs the author published some black and white photos as an annex. The photos are chosen in accordance with the content of the book and with interesting description as well. One of the interesting photos is the picture of the Secretary-General of the UN **Kofi Annan** taken in Iraq, showing him in a company of security contractors. After looking at those photos reader can realize the importance of the PMCs that they have been phenomenon influencing the international security relations and their services have been used by a broad spectrum of actors, not only states but by the international organizations as well.

To conclude, we can say that the book *Guns for Hire: The Inside Story of Freelance Soldiering/ Žoldáci: Zsvěcený příběh nájemných žoldnů* is recommended for the readers who have already a certain extent of knowledge about the issue of mercenaries and contractors. The book is written quite impartially and objectively, the author mentions advantages of the involvement

of the PMCs and problems which occurred as a consequence of contractors' deployment in conflict zones. Author offers a few interesting forms, such as online discussion published in the book. This form, e.g. published online discussions, offers unique possibility for a reader to compare particular points of view in one place. This book is recommended for students, academicians and analysts dealing with the security aspect of international relations, but who have already a certain level of knowledge about the privatisation of war. The book is also recommended for the readers who would like to gain knowledge about the issue of practical use of the PMC.