



Blackwater looks set to survive an Afghan government clampdown on mercenaries after Hamid Karzai was forced by his western partners to abandon a complete disbandment of private security companies.

Under plans to be announced by the Afghan government this month many security contractors, whom Karzai regards as being little better than militias, will be allowed to continue operating for another year.

As part of a complex new transition strategy the government is giving them until 21 March 2012 before most security for development projects is taken over by the Afghan Public Protection Force. The APPF is a government security service intended to assume control over the country's hugely lucrative commercial security industry, which employs around 30,000 guards.

Western and Afghan officials say the draft plans drawn up by former Karzai opponent Ashraf Ghani will actually allow companies to keep supplying private guards and security services to development projects indefinitely. According to a list seen by The Guardian 11 companies operating in Afghanistan that have a good reputation with government officials will enjoy favoured status in taking over contracts.

Xe Services, formerly known as Blackwater, is included in that group despite being banned in Iraq and notorious for its activities in Afghanistan.

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