

2008: Safari Tourism in Iraq
by Pablo Ouziel

Shortly after the occupation of Iraq in 2003, Coalition Provisional Authority administrator Paul Bremer issued an edict granting immunity to U.S. military and civilian personnel including employees of Blackwater USA, from criminal prosecution in Iraqi courts.

On October 7th 2007, Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said the investigation set up by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki had found Blackwater "deliberately killed" the 17 people in the September 16th shooting in western Baghdad. For this incident according to senior government sources, the Iraqi government wants U.S. security firm Blackwater to pay \$8 million in compensation to each of the families of the 17 people killed.

US Defence Department figures reveal that Blackwater is just one of more than 100 private security companies operating in Iraq with more than 160,000 personnel.

To be honest in these times of wildly justified actions and complete western indifference, nothing shocks me anymore, so now that the puppet government of Iraq has put a price on the head of civilian Iraqis, I would not be surprised to hear that Blackwater USA employees and other security personnel are going to be re-deployed, to give way for a new style of Safari tourism in Iraq to begin - that of man-hunting.

After observing closely how things are done in this flourishing 'free world' of ours, I am confident about the fact that more than one venture capital company, would be willing to invest in a well-thought out business plan for a company offering this kind of service as a form of adventure tourism for westerners, starting in 2008. With a bit of lobbying in Washington, a few speeches in the UN General Assembly, and a few commissions for Iraqi officials paid in full in a foreign tax haven, it shouldn't be too difficult to get the operation started.

The way things are moving, the way we as westerners have shown a complete lack of respect for Iraqi people, we should not be surprised if come 2008 we are able to go to our local travel operators to make reservations for these Safari expeditions. Instead of having our governments do the killing for us, since most of the western population seems so acceptant of such actions, we could go and do the job ourselves. Let us finish the job, what our military and private contractors have not achieved, we could do as part of our relaxation.

The slogan for an ad promoting this holiday could read; "Relax away from the buzz, take a break, unwind and shoot some Iraqis. Contribute to your national pride." A little footnote at the bottom of the ad could read; "Your government endorses this effort and encourages you to stabilize the Middle East. All killings are subsidised."

The Iraqi people live far away from our western reality, they follow different traditions, they speak a different language we can't understand, and more importantly they don't

have the wealth we westerners have been able to amass after centuries of imperialistic theft. Let us westerners be honest to ourselves for a minute, would this kind of business venture really shock us? Would we really worry about the Iraqi people? Or would many westerners run to their travel agents with the hope of being the first in line?

Although a few days ago in a keynote speech at the 'Expose War Crimes: Criminalize War Exhibition', Malaysian ex-premier Mahathir Mohamad said that war is in fact legitimized terror orchestrated by the powerful states against the weak, and emphasized the fact that "history should remember Blair and Bush as the killers of children or as the lying prime minister and president," I am not sure western society has understood that we will be remembered as the people that allowed them free reign.

So as the words of President Bush speaking to an audience assembled by the Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce and Industry, still resonate in my ears; "If we left (Iraq) before the job was done, there would be chaos." I am more inclined to believe the comments made by Paul Rogers of The Oxford Research Group, who in a new report emphasized that "every aspect of the war on terror has been counterproductive in Iraq and Afghanistan, from the loss of civilian life through (to) mass detentions without trial. In short, it has been a disaster."

I wonder if the publicised incident of Blackwater USA will serve as the wakeup call for western nations to realise what we have become, or it will pave the way towards an eventual Iraqi Safari Park for those westerners who flourish in capitalism to indulge themselves in the 'pleasure' of shooting Iraqi civilians. Whatever the answer to this troubling dilemma, what is certain as Edward Said rightly said, is "that even the person doing the kicking has to ask himself how long he can go on kicking. At some point your leg is going to get tired. One day you'll wake up and ask; what the fuck am I doing?"

Published October 12th 2007