

The Los Angeles Commission on Wackenhut and Private Security Standards

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Security Officers Detail Alleged Racial Discrimination, Illegal Business Practices and Poor Performance by City of L.A.'s Largest Security Contractor

Wackenhut Employees From the U.S. and Africa Testify Before Panel Led By Congresswoman Diane Watson and State Senator Ridley-Thomas

Los Angeles— Current and former employees of Wackenhut, the city of Los Angeles' largest security contractor, testified before a commission of national and local leaders today about alleged racial and sexual discrimination, illegal retaliation against workers and poor performance by the security corporation. The second-largest private security company in the United States, Wackenhut has more than \$5 million in contracts with the city of Los Angeles to protect buildings that include the Watts and Van Nuys city halls.

Three Wackenhut security officers from the U.S. Department of Energy's nuclear facility in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, addressed the commission regarding the hostile work environment, and "continuing systemic racial discrimination" they and other African American officers have allegedly faced at that facility.

"The level of sheer racism that South African security officers have faced at the hands of Wackenhut's parent company, Group 4 Securicor, is unimaginable," said Moonlight Mbatha, who traveled from the African nation to address the commission. "Workers have been called baboons and other derogatory names, and some say they have been forbidden to use toilets that are reserved for whites only."

Security officers also testified about problems at Wackenhut-guarded facilities that potentially compromised the security of those sites, including the Department of Homeland Security headquarters in Washington, D.C.

"In this time of heightened security threats that include chemical and biological weapons, Wackenhut did not have a procedure to detect these potentially deadly agents nor did it provide adequate training to its officers on how to handle these situations," said former Wackenhut security officer Derrick Daniels who worked at DHS.

Wackenhut is in a position to lead efforts to raise standards in the industry, yet the company is standing in the way of security officers in Los Angeles and around the country trying to improve their lives.

At the hearing, Terence Purnell, a former Wackenhut officer at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, D.C. told the panel he was fired when managers learned he was part of an effort of security officers to form a union with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Last January, the National Labor Relations Board ruled that Wackenhut illegally intimidated and interrogated workers at the IMF.

"Though I feel vindicated by the NLRB's decision, I hope that no other Wackenhut employee has to go through the pain I went through for trying to exercise my civil right to form a union," said Mr. Purnell.

In the coming weeks, the Commission will release a report with more detailed findings on Wackenhut and may make recommendations on whether the city of Los Angeles should look further into its contract with the company.