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As the AP reports security problems at Holston Army Ammo Plant...

US Govt Has Ignored Multiple Problems Involving Troubled Security Contractor Wackenhut

UK-Owned Security Firm at Holston Also Has Troubled Record at U.S. Nuclear Sites, Power Plants, Army Bases, DHS HQ

Washington, D.C. – U.S. government agencies have ignored multiple problems involving the troubled security contractor Wackenhut Services, Inc., (WSI) who Monday was exposed by whistleblowing employees for lax security practices at the Holston Army Ammunitions Plant in Kingsport, TN. The officers allege Wackenhut cheats during security inspections, cuts back on perimeter patrols to save on gasoline, and has allowed civilians in rowboats, including teenage girls, to gain access to the plant by water.

The Holston plant in Tennessee produces explosives used in various missiles, as well as C4, a military plastic explosive. "I think you can safely say if it goes boom, it comes from here," said an Army spokesperson. The plant is operated for the U.S. Army by foreign-owned BAE Systems, which subcontracts to WSI.

WSI is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Wackenhut Corporation, which is owned by London-based security conglomerate Group 4 Securicor. The foreign-owned Wackenhut is the largest provider of contract security services to the US federal government, and guards dozens of highly sensitive nuclear weapons sites and nuclear power plants.

At these sites, multiple security problems have been reported in the last several years, including findings that Wackenhut:

- Was caught cheating on an anti-terrorism drill at a U.S. nuclear site;
- Performed poorly on an anti-terrorism drill and was found by the DOE's Inspector General to have "systematically" violated weapons inventory and handling policies at another U.S. nuclear weapons site;
- Was criticized for a conflict of interest involving security testing of commercial nuclear power plants in the US;
- Was criticized after an internal memo revealed that veteran officers at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant trained new guards on the best places to hide and take a nap;
- Guards were accused of cutting corners on patrols at a nuclear power plant;
- Is being sued and is under investigation by a government auditor for overbilling on public contracts that have been estimated to be worth

millions;

- Is a subcontractor on a contract to guard U.S. Army bases which has been found to have inflated costs, missing training records, and problems screening new hires.

Despite these problems, Wackenhut continues to be the US government's leading supplier of private guards, holding multi-million dollar contracts with the Department of Energy, and other agencies. The company guards seven nuclear sites operated by the US Energy Dept, including some that store highly enriched uranium. Wackenhut also guards more than half (31) of the nation's commercial nuclear power plants.

"How many mistakes does a contractor like Wackenhut need to make for government agencies to realize they are not right for the job?" said Stephen Lerner, Director of the Property Services Division of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the nation's largest security officers' union. "Wackenhut has a pre-9/11 mentality about security. There has been problem after problem. There are other, much better, alternatives than Wackenhut." For more info about security problems involving Wackenhut, visit www.EyeonWackenhut.com.

Wackenhut Under Investigation at Oak Ridge Nuclear Weapons Site in Tenn.

The AP story appears just as the U.S. Dept of Energy is deciding whether or not to renew Wackenhut's security contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars at the Oak Ridge Reservation in Tennessee, a key U.S. nuclear science and weapons production facility, where Wackenhut is also facing investigation concerning falsification of training records, according to the DOE Inspector General. A conviction or civil judgment for falsification of records may be grounds for suspension or debarment of contracts under the U.S. government's federal acquisitions regulations.

Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense Drop Wackenhut

News of Wackenhut's security failures at Holston follows the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's decision to drop Wackenhut's as the contractor at its Washington, D.C. headquarters after revelations of extensive security breaches at the site, including a botched response to a suspected anthrax attack in the building that houses the DHS Secretary, Michael Chertoff. According to the Associated Press, Wackenhut officers alleged they have no training in responding to attacks with weapons of mass destruction; chemical-sniffing dogs have been replaced with ineffective equipment that falsely indicates the presence of explosives; vehicle entrances are lightly guarded; and guards with radios have trouble hearing each other, or have no radios, no batons and no pepper spray, leaving them with few options beyond lethal force with their handguns.

SEIU, the nation's largest security officers' union, has a national program to raise the standards in the private security industry. More than 55,000 private security officers and public safety personnel are members of SEIU. SEIU has more than 1.8 million members overall.