

Chapter 6: The military as business – Military Professional Resources, Incorporated

Jakkie Cilliers and Ian Douglas

Introduction

The United States is the unrivalled military superpower at the close of the 20th century, its share in global deliveries of major conventional weapons having increased to 43 per cent.¹ Even more significantly, US military research and development spending was more than seven times that of France, its nearest competitor, in 1997. It is this strategic investment as much as the size of the US military that will ensure its military dominance into the next millennium. It is only natural that US dominance in global military terms also impacts upon the private security industry.

During the Vietnam War, US ‘private military activity’ was probably epitomised by the operations of the Vinnell Corporation, which began as a southern Californian construction firm in 1931. The company’s involvement in military and intelligence work came at the end of World War II when it shipped military supplies on contract from the US government to Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Army in China. It continued with contracts to build military airfields in Pakistan, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and South Vietnam throughout the 1950s and ‘60s. In return for serving as a cover for operatives of the Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA helped Vinnell to win construction contracts on oilfields in Libya and Iran. During the American war in Southeast Asia from 1965 to 1975, Vinnell became directly involved in military and intelligence operations. At the height of the war, it had more than 5 000 employees in Vietnam. In his study of Vinnell, Gaul quotes a Pentagon official who described Vinnell as “... *our own little mercenary army in Vietnam ... We used them to do things we either didn’t have the manpower to do ourselves, or because of legal problems.*”²

Vinnell subsequently fell on hard times, but in 1975 landed a US \$77 million contract to train the National Guard of Saudi Arabia – a contact that has expanded since and remains Vinnell’s most profitable venture. The current contract is worth US \$163 million. The Saudi National Guard has a separate command chain and serves, effectively, as the palace guard to the ruling royal family, ensuring the survival of the present regime and a strategic US ally in the Middle East. This is achieved not at the cost of the US, but out of the Saudi national purse and at a much lower political risk than the use of US military services would incur.³

Vinnell and other companies such as Betac, DynCorp, Ronco and Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) have undertaken ‘military training missions’ in Sri Lanka, Angola, Peru, Rwanda, Taiwan and Sweden. The activities of these companies have not been the subject of significant academic research, nor is information readily available on the industry.

Military Professional Resources, Incorporated (MPRI) is, of course, not Vinnell. Yet, from humble beginnings less than a decade ago, MPRI has probably become the best-known and

largest current US private military company. Initiated, nurtured, and led by the élite of retired US military personnel, it has taken a prominent place in the lucrative market offered by the outsourcing of many former military functions. MPRI is similar to Vinnell in that it is encouraged to undertake profit-making military ventures that are aligned with the national security interests of the US, but does so overtly.

Until now, MPRI has not been a major factor in Africa. Despite what appears to have been a direct request by President Clinton to Angolan President dos Santos to consider the employment of MPRI to train the Angolan armed forces, there is, as yet, no confirmation of the company's involvement in that country. MPRI and companies similar to it are undoubtedly destined to play an important role in national, regional and even global security affairs in the future.

The company

According to the MPRI website, “[t]he centre of mass of the company’s US defence effort is in doctrinal development, force management, and activity based costing. New equipment training for active and reserve components, Army Staff support, wargaming, test and evaluation, and War College support are other sizeable MPRI efforts ... MPRI’s current international efforts are centred in the Balkans, where the company conducts Democracy Transition Assistance Programs, Long Range Management Programs, and Military Stabilisation Programs involving the training and equipping of armies in transition. As part of these programs, MPRI established and runs a Battle Simulation and a Combat Training Centre.”⁴

MPRI was established nine years ago and has its corporate headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, in the US. By the end of 1998, it had more than 400 employees with a turnover of US \$48 million for 1997. The company is quite clearly a product of the post-Cold War defence downsizing and the reduction in the size of standing military forces, the US Army in particular. As in the case of most other armed forces, the US Department of Defense has tried to protect the central warfighting capability of its military by focusing resources on operational field formations and by outsourcing and privatising non-warfighting activities such as administration, logistics and even training.

The domestic market for MPRI’s services within the US is therefore mainly the privatisation of appropriate military support functions. One example of the close relationship between MPRI and the US military and the extent of outsourcing that is occurring within many of the armed forces of the developed world is that MPRI took over the management and conduct of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) in June 1998. As part of this contract, MPRI will provide 73 retired colonels to perform this task. By comparison, the US Army has only sixty colonels serving in its ten regular field divisions.

Typical of the defence industry in general, economies of scale have dictated that MPRI look towards the international market to reduce unit costs. By December 1998, MPRI had twenty contracts worth more than US \$90 million of which only three were international, and not for the US government. While the greater number of MPRI’s contracts are domestic, the split

between domestic and international business in dollar terms is about even. The international marketplace is clearly more lucrative than the domestic one, and the company has embarked upon an aggressive international expansion programme.

The MPRI resource pool consists of more than 7 000 retired soldiers and officers who span the spectrum from general officer to infantry squad leader. MPRI includes more than 200 general or flag officers in its pool of those available for ‘duty.’ In his personal message on the MPRI website, Major-General (retired) Vernon B Lewis, President and Chief Executive Officer, is forthright:

“We are owned and operated by retired senior military professionals and/or their families. We work throughout the United States and in far-flung corners of the world, doing important things. If you have military or other skills that would be of value to our diverse, wide-ranging customers, we invite you to add your name to our database through this web site ... and be considered for future employment.”⁵

MPRI’s activities span the spectrum from teaching simple soldier skills to the production of the highest level of doctrine and teaching of the US and other forces – from grade school to post-graduate work. In its prospectus, MPRI defines its mission and vision as follows:

“MPRI’s mission is to gather and employ the experience and talent of the top of the national resource of former military professionals, primarily in defence related areas, for the US government, and to assist foreign governments in converting their military into western models that support democratic institutions ... The MPRI Vision is to create a company of high quality professionals – tapping the cream of former/retired military – that sets the standard for quality performance, contract flexibility, business ethics, and management integrity, a company that makes a positive difference for those with whom it works, a company that grows in revenue and reputation; a company with world wide recognition and respect.”

While MPRI does provide ‘soft’ services focusing on civil-military relations in a democracy, the vast majority of its activities are hard-core defence-related: fielding new weapons systems and conducting new equipment training, strategic and tactical military planning, simulation and wargaming, logistics management, doctrinal development, test and evaluation, operations research and analysis, force design and management, combat development, special operations, security assistance, fire support, law enforcement, maritime operations, military intelligence training, explosive ordnance training, and so on.⁶

MPRI has not provided armed personnel for use in direct security duties and emphasises that, as a matter of corporate policy, members of MPRI are unarmed – although it is clearly ambivalent regarding arms for self-defence purposes in high threat situations. Until now, the company claims that it has had to arm its members only during contracts in direct support of US government policy, such as the Military Stabilisation Program in Croatia, which is described below.

Nor does MPRI consider direct participation in military combat similar to the arrangements made between the government of Sierra Leone and Executive Outcomes, and the contract

signed by the government of Papua New Guinea and Sandline. The official MPRI response regarding involvement in military combat operations is: “*If you want Executive Outcomes you don’t want MPRI.*”⁷ The distinction between direct participation in combat and advising and planning operations is, of course, spurious. The difference between the man who pulls the trigger and the operational staff who decided where to attack, when and with what, or the trainer who moulds units into effective operational units, remains debatable. In fact, the MPRI website states that “... *MPRI can perform any task or accomplish any mission requiring military skill ... short of combat operations.*”⁸

The defining characteristics of MPRI contracts are those limitations set by US law and the requirement that the company obtains a US government licence for its activities. Corporate activities within the US are governed by numerous federal and state laws which are applied to all businesses. MPRI sees itself simply as another domestic company, vying for contracts with similar US companies.

The acceptance of international commitments in the field of defence-related activities is governed by the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 (as amended) which regulates all foreign sales of ‘defence goods and services’, and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations that flow from it. Application for a licence must be made to, and approved by the Political Military Bureau of the Department of State. In this regard, even while bilateral discussions are allowed to take place, no commitment may be undertaken without the approval of the State Department. Indeed, where considered necessary, the Department will dictate conditions that must exist before a licence will be issued. The US Department of Defense is part of the interagency review that vets all such contract applications to the State Department. As an example, the licence for MPRI to seek a contract with the government of Angola was delayed for a time by the Department of Defense. In this case, the Pentagon demanded that nine generals from the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) had to be integrated into the *Forças Armadas Angolanas* (FAA), as previously agreed to by that government, before the Department of Defense would approve the application. The nine were accepted and the reservation of the US military was subsequently removed. Although the licence was ultimately issued, it has apparently not been activated. There are also reviews of contracts in progress (so-called ‘in progress reviews’, or IPRs) and, if anomalies or violations of the prescribed conditions are detected, the Department reserves the right to cancel the licence.

The Democracy Transition Assistance Program for the Republic of Croatia

One example of MPRI’s operations is the Democracy Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) that it provides in Croatia.

On 24 March 1994, the Defence Minister of Croatia appealed to the US military for assistance. In his letter to the Pentagon, Gojko Susak wrote that Croatia’s goal was the transformation of the Croatian military “... *to one which follows the model of the United States.*” More to the point, the Croatian army had suffered defeat at the hands of the Serbs in

1991 and Bosnian Croat forces fought Bosnian Muslim forces in a bloody stand-off during 1993. Serb forces occupied more than thirty per cent of Croatia. Although Washington was sympathetic to what it viewed as a potential moderate ally in an unstable region, a United Nations arms embargo tied the hands of the US armed forces. Pentagon officials referred Susak to MPRI.⁹

The Croatian Embassy in Washington subsequently contacted MPRI asking for assistance. The Croatians stated at the time that, with the end of the Cold War, the democratisation of Eastern Europe, and the ultimate expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the structure of their military should be reviewed with a view to make it more compatible with its potential NATO partners. Sacirbey, the former Bosnian Foreign Minister, stated in an article in *US News and World Report* that he had selected MPRI from a handful of competitors because it was the next-best thing to official US military assistance. However, he remained disappointed that the US was not willing to train the new Bosnian-Croat Federation forces itself.¹⁰

MPRI organised a five-person survey team who visited Croatia, and completed an assessment of requirements. After this initial exploration, the company decided to apply the Democracy Transition and Assistance Program, which it saw as a generic programme for emerging democracies.¹¹ Programme goals were to educate military officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and civilian officials of the Ministry of Defence in the areas of leadership, management, and civil-military operations. Once the general agreements had been worked out bilaterally, it then remained for MPRI to arrange the licence with the Department of State – but only after certifying that it would only provide instruction on such non-lethal subjects as leadership skills and the role of the military in an emerging democracy. Since the UN arms embargo also required the US to restrict the activities of private security companies, MPRI “... *could not provide direct military planning or intelligence services or advice on strategy or tactics to Croatia or any other party in the former Yugoslavia.*”¹²

One specific requirement saw MPRI design a fifteen-year programme to re-establish a competent core of NCOs. This programme initially involved NCO courses being conducted by MPRI personnel, with a longer term view of turning over the programme to the Croatian forces. The initial course was of six weeks’ duration and emphasised structure, management and leadership functions.¹³ The first contract for this part of the programme started in 1994, was for two years and was subsequently renewed for a second two-year period.

Popular legend has it that the immediate effects of MPRI’s involvement were impressive. According to Gaul,

*“... the impact of the ... MPRI-Croatia contract was dramatic. Just months after MPRI was hired to conduct leadership seminars for top Croatian military officers, the Croatian army launched the stunningly successful Operation Ulja [Storm] against the Serb-held Krajina region of Croatia. In a fivepronged offensive, the Croatian commanders integrated air power, artillery and rapid infantry movements to target the Serb command and control networks, sending much of the Serb army into retreat.”*¹⁴

The mechanised, all-arms integration evident during Operation Ulja appeared in marked contrast to the Soviet doctrine that had previously characterised Croat operations. Naturally, MPRI was credited with these changes.

Yet, closer examination appears to contradict popular legend. In the months leading up to Operation Ulja, from late 1994 to mid-1995, MPRI's DTAP training cadre consisted of a former general officer, fourteen other personnel, three of whom were majors or captains, with the remainder being retired enlisted personnel.¹⁵ During the same period, two IPRs of the programme were performed by two senior members of MPRI, both retired four-star generals. Collectively, these officers would not easily have been able to impact upon combat doctrine to the extent implied in the limited time subsequent to MPRI's deployment into Croatia. It therefore remains a matter of speculation whether MPRI violated the terms of the UN arms embargo. "...[B]ut the results for the United States national security apparatus were clearly positive: without the involvement of a single American soldier or a single American dollar, the MPRI project strengthened Croatia's military and bolstered the nation's strategic position in the region."¹⁶ The fact that these developments were attributed to MPRI, however, did not harm the company's international promotional campaign.

In reality, a number of US (and possibly other) covert assistance programmes, predating and running concurrently with the MPRI contract in Croatia, had a much more direct impact upon ensuing battles.¹⁷ MPRI may be a welcome scapegoat and may benefit from the resulting publicity, but the Croatian military successes were probably not a direct result of its contract with the Croatian Ministry of Defence.

Military Stabilisation Program for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

MPRI's Military Stabilisation Program (MSP)¹⁸ was initiated in early August 1996 and is assisting the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina Armed Forces (FAF) with the fielding of military equipment, and the conduct of a broad-based training programme. The company's successful bid occurred in competition with various other US companies, for the training and support requirements that would allow for the integration of new and additional military equipment into the new armed forces structure of the Federation. MPRI's 'equip and train' programme is run for the US State Department's Office of the Special Representative of Military Stabilisation in the Balkans. The assistance was touted as part of an international effort, led by the US, to improve the Federation's military capabilities to deter further Serb aggression by establishing a military balance sufficient to permit NATO's Stabilisation Force (SFOR) to withdraw from the region. Politically, it also serves to eliminate the Iranian influence in Bosnia that resulted from the presence of several hundred *mujaheddin* fighters and the provision of Iranian military aid during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, a standard joke in Bosnia was that MPRI really stood for Military Professionals Replacing Iran!

The US government contributed approximately \$100 million worth of equipment surplus to the needs of its downsized army which included 45 M60A3 main battle tanks, eighty

armoured personnel carriers, fifteen helicopters, 840 light anti-tank weapons, 116 medium gun-howitzers and several thousand small arms and other equipment. These arms are supplemented by significant military equipment grants from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Kuwait, Malaysia and Brunei.

The linkage to clear domestic foreign policy goals – the withdrawal of US forces and countering the spread of Islamic fundamentalism – ensured that the contract had cross-agency backing from the US intelligence community, the Pentagon and State Department, as well as bipartisan congressional support. Yet, Washington’s European allies viewed the introduction of significant additional arms into Bosnia with disfavour, despite the fact that the US-Bosnian arms package fell within the limits of Article IV of the Dayton Peace Agreement. According to *The Washington Post*, “[p]ouring new weaponry and military instruction into the Balkans ... is an invitation to renewed conflict and undercuts enforcement of arms-control limits. Some European officials also worry that as tensions inevitably rise regarding refugee resettlement and other potential flash points the know-how and weapons could turn against peacekeeping forces.”¹⁹ Advocates of the contract argue, however, that without a military balance within the region, there is little chance of stability.

The purpose of the contract was to provide the FAF with the military capability to deter armed aggression and, should deterrence fail, to defend the Federation’s territory and population. Training and doctrine focused on defensive warfare in contrast to the offensive tactics that the Bosnians had previously favoured.²⁰ This is therefore a classic military training mission, not unlike some of the services that Sandline International offers and that Executive Outcomes claims to have provided to the armed forces of Angola and Sierra Leone. The big difference, of course, is that Executive Outcomes eventually participated directly in combat, as well as offering training, advice and assistance. There is, furthermore, a crucial distinction to be drawn between the amount of external oversight and leverage in Bosnia compared to Angola. In Bosnia, NATO monitors and literally controls the armed forces of the Federation, partly through the SFOR forces deployed in the field. As a result, NATO commanders in Bosnia monitor the programme closely, restricting where and when Bosnian units can train and what training is conducted. In this sense, the equipment and training provided to the Bosnia and Herzegovina forces are part of a comprehensive stabilisation programme, very different from anything attempted in either Angola or Sierra Leone where inadequate international and regional peacekeeping forces have not had the same resources or mandate. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, MPRI is part of a wide process to solidify the integration of the previously opposing Muslim and Croat forces into a single army, which until then existed only on paper.²¹

With a contract worth several tens of millions of dollars, and with more than 200 individuals in the field, representing myriad skills otherwise available only in the US Army, MPRI acts in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina very much as a direct organ of US policy, with considerable domestic and foreign policy advantages. Not only do MPRI’s activities not impact upon the warfighting ability of the US Army, but the bill to extend its foreign policy interests is being paid by someone else (the Muslim Brotherhood). For the US, this is a win-win situation to the benefit of the State Department, the Department of Defense and, of course, MPRI itself, without running the risks of the issue being exploited for domestic political capital.

Civilian observers

MPRI has also participated in the provision of unarmed civilians in 'observer' roles. The mission, analogous to a UN Observer Mission (UNTSO, UNMOGIP, etc.), was established by the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. It deployed civilian observers along the border of Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro) and the Bosnian-Serb controlled portion of Bosnia and Herzegovina from November 1994 to April 1996. The US government agreed to supply some forty observers as its contribution to the multinational mission. The positions were to be filled by both the State and Defense Departments. While the Department of Defense immediately decided to outsource the commitment to MPRI, the State Department initially tried to meet the requirement with its own civilian personnel, but eventually also contracted MPRI. The nature of the company and its employees provided an immediate reaction ability that the State Department itself could not match. Since MPRI employees were on contract to the US government in terms of a mandate from the international community, they were provided with additional protection under US law and international conventions.

All indications are that MPRI executed the contract successfully. The major difference was that the US taxpayer paid the bill, though it is safe to assume that the cost was lower than it would have been, had professional military or foreign service members been used.

There can be little doubt that this is the first of many instances in which the US, for one, will seek to outsource classic UN observer missions.

Africa

MPRI maintains that it has never had any significant activity in Africa apart from a two-man, vehicle instructor contract with the US government to support equipment donated to Liberia. MPRI, however, has been pursuing a significant contract in Angola for some years. The US government played a direct role in pressuring the Angolan government to evict Executive Outcomes and lobbied hard on behalf of MPRI, although without success thus far.²² Senior company representatives have visited Angola on a number of occasions over the past two years to negotiate the contract. Although the State Department has already approved a licence for the contract,²³ very few specifics of the nature of the contract are available, notwithstanding the fact that a team leader has been appointed and, one would assume, detailed preparations have been completed.²⁴

The MPRI contract in Angola would probably duplicate, in general, some of the elements of its operation in Croatia and Bosnia, thereby including at least some sort of DTAP, officer and NCO training, as well as core military competencies. During an interview, MPRI Vice-President, Ed Soyster, stated that he had briefed the Angolan authorities on the company and its abilities. He outlined what contributions the company might make to an Angola free of civil war, faced with the task of rebuilding its armed forces in a democracy. He pointed to the obvious fact that a stable, well-trained and motivated national armed force would have a strong confidence-building role in the early phases of post-conflict reconstruction.

MPRI has also been contracted to assist with the implementation of the US capacity-building programme in Africa, the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI).²⁵

The potential problems which will have to be faced in Angola by MPRI and the US government, in its role of managing the licence for such operations, are both interesting and dangerous from a business, ethical and foreign policy point of view. After two, almost three years of negotiations no contract has been signed. A particular problem during the negotiations with the Angolan government appeared to be specific irregular ways and methods of payment demanded of the company should it wish to be successful in its tender.

Conclusion

Ilsenberg²⁶ was one of many analysts who suggested that the hiring of MPRI to carry out the DTAP and 'train and equip' programmes circumvents "... *the need to take the issue to Congress or the American public.*"²⁷ The examples of 'Air America', the CIA clandestine airline of the Vietnam War, Vinnell and Contra-operations in the 1980s, have been used to draw parallels to the current relationship between MPRI and the US Administration. Although there is some validity to these arguments, the driving force behind US government support of MPRI appears to be that of outsourcing and the privatisation of US foreign and security policy, rather than as a mechanism to avoid congressional oversight. The fact remains that, while MPRI may be constrained in its operations by the very nature of its overt close relationship with the US government, this may not be the situation with other companies or organisations. Private military service contractors may readily go beyond government sanctioned operations in search of higher profits. And the central question remains whether a developed democracy should be able to side-step domestic or even international opposition to involvement in political hot spots by simply arranging for civilian contractors to be put in harm's way. This was clearly the practical, if perhaps unintended effect of MPRI's involvement in Croatia, since the US military was barred from the region when MPRI first entered the Balkans.

This, of course, does not reduce the requirement for mechanisms designed to provide the checks and balances essential when applying 'armed force' to foreign policy. Nor does it reduce the demand for public debate, or at least public knowledge prior to 'exporting' arms or armed force. These concerns again underline the need for an emphasis on corporate 'good governance' practices and for openness and transparency in this area – within the US and elsewhere. Despite the contribution by the UN and efforts by many non-governmental organisations, the global defence and security service trade continues virtually unchecked and the black market trade in arms and defence-related services continues to expand.

While press oversight and investigative journalism provide some protection against abuse, the lack of public information on the activities of private security contracts, in particular, ensures that only the most dogged of journalists manage to track events and glean information.

The challenge of appropriate US oversight over activities of companies such as MPRI reflects the hard-nosed realist spectacles through which US policy-makers and politicians alike

generally view the world. At the risk of gross oversimplification, the US view of the international arena reflects a domestic capitalist ethos – an approach where ‘own interest’ and ‘anything goes’ predominate. Domestically, this environment is exemplified by competitor economics and politics. The system works because it is in balance – the result of a complex society that is at once diversified, complex and intensely competitive. When this approach is brought to bear in a very unbalanced and skewed international system, the result is often different from that intended.

During the Cold War, US foreign policy – including covert military assistance and arms exports – was aimed at supporting allies and undermining communist countries and their sympathisers. While the US executive branch has proven over the years that it is adept at finding loopholes in congressional oversight, there is a broad consensus between the US legislature and the executive regarding ‘legitimate’ security interests in countries such as Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – as well as on the means through which to support these interests. Gaul’s view on MPRI appears spot on: *“Recent dramatic reductions in federal budgets for national security agencies, as well as sensitive political and diplomatic considerations have lead the US to increasingly rely on corporate enterprises such as MPRI to perform military and quasi-military functions abroad. These private military service contractors ... view military activity as a purely commercial enterprise.”*²⁸ The privatisation of US foreign and national security policy is primarily driven by domestic commercial and economic trends to the benefit of both the Pentagon and the State Department.

In simple terms, if the US military or State Department does not wish to contribute, for whatever reason, to stability in war-torn African societies, commercial companies such as MPRI and others will do so. The only restriction is the ability of their customers to pay and the willingness of the State Department to licence such companies’ activities outside the US. *“For the American government, soliciting retired officers to accept privately-financed military contracts that further American interests is extremely cost-effective.”*²⁹

There can be little doubt that the use of private military service contractors by the US in Africa will increase as a corollary to US withdrawal after the peacekeeping debacle in Somalia. Thus far, it has largely been Britain and France that have played similar roles in Africa, but on a bilateral, country-to-country basis. In the case of Britain, this has mainly occurred through its various British Military Advisory and Training Teams (BMATT). Britain currently has such teams in Zimbabwe for Southern Africa, in South Africa to assist with the integration of the South African National Defence Force, in Ghana for West Africa, and will also shortly establish a team in East Africa. One could speculate, for example, over the requirement to re-establish a competent and effective armed force in the Democratic Republic of Congo as part of a lasting regional peace settlement if Rwanda and Uganda’s security concerns are to be met. Similarly, the requirement for the reprofessionalisation of the armed forces of countries such as Sierra Leone, Congo-Brazzaville, Lesotho and even Nigeria remains unfulfilled. Experience would indicate that these types of programmes require a single lead nation (or company) for practical doctrinal reasons rather than to rely upon a coalition of forces. The latter leads to confused doctrine, command and control practices and inevitably reduces the impact of the training and assistance that are provided.

There is undoubtedly a legitimate place in the development assistance activities of the international community to provide help for democratic military development and regional stability. This does not necessarily mean training only in military skills, but much broader programmes designed to assist and cohere civil control of the armed forces in emerging democracies. Inevitably, such projects may have unintended consequences. Few foreign policy initiatives can guarantee unequivocal results. US officials and civilians, for example, may experience reprisal attacks elsewhere in retaliation for what is perceived to be assistance to one side to a conflict by a company seen to be closely aligned to the US Administration, such as in the case of MPRI.

Given the reduced sizes and over-commitment of most Western armies, companies such as MPRI are an inevitable requirement today, one which will only grow in the future

In the light of the shortage of resources and the ‘donor fatigue’ which seems to be affecting the international community, one has to consider novel approaches to development assistance outside the accepted UN/NGO nexus which has existed to date. While major advances in good governance will still require management at the highest level of the international community, there appears to be a gap for skilled private organisations that can tackle the complicated, technical problems in the military, political and logistic affairs of emerging nations. Given a proper system of checks and balances, companies such as MPRI and Defence Systems Limited (DSL) may contribute to peace and development.³⁰ The questions of methods of payment and the nature of the contracts awarded, however, will require particular transparency and oversight. What is necessary is a code of ethics – established, maintained and properly monitored – which would see the delivery of military training, education, and professional development in the democratic mould without interference with the sovereignty of nations which make use of the service.

Endnotes

- 1 According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).
- 2 This account of Vinnell is entirely based on that of M J Gaul, *Regulating the New Privateers: Private Military Service Contracting and the Modern Marque and Reprisal Clause*, Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review, June 1998.
- 3 Vinnell’s parent company is BDM International.
- 4 See, <www.mpri.com/about/activities.htm>, 31 December 1998.
- 5 See, <www.mpri.com/welcome3.htm>, 31 December 1998.
- 6 See, <www.mpri.com/about/capabilities.htm>, 31 December 1998.
- 7 E Soyster, Personal Interview, Virginia, 15 October 1997.
- 8 See, <www.mpri.com/about/capabilities.htm>, 31 December 1998.
- 9 Gaul, op. cit.
- 10 *Private US Companies Train Armies Around the World*, US News and World Report, 8 February 1997, <www.mpri.com/current/nr020897.htm>, 31 December 1998.

- 11 Subsequent contract extensions were called DTAP I and DTAP II.
- 12 Gaul, op. cit.
- 13 During the IPR that was conducted after six months of the programme, a specific and detailed briefing on the course content was made by a former NCO of the US Army. The Chief of the General Staff (CGS) of the Croatian Army was very surprised by the calibre of the presentation and suggested that he had assumed that the briefer was a senior officer.
- 14 Gaul, op. cit.
- 15 Soyster, op. cit.
- 16 Gaul, op. cit.
- 17 Should such a connection have existed, it would have been in clear breach of the State Department licence which did not permit combat operations.
- 18 See T Arbuckl, *Building a Bosnian Army*, Jane's International Defense Review, August 1997, <www.mpri.com/nr897.htm>, 31 December 1998; B Graham, *Ex-GIs Work to Give Bosnian Force a Fighting Chance*, The Washington Post, 29 January 1997, <www.mpri.com/current/nrOl2997.htm>, 31 December 1998.
- 19 Graham, *ibid.*
- 20 Federation forces are taught five tasks through a five-phase programme, namely hasty defence, deliberate defence, move to contact, limited counterattack and counterfire technology.
- 21 The two armies were allied early in the Bosnian war, then fought one another during 1993 and 1994 before resuming a loose alliance against the Bosnian Serbs.
- 22 US News and World Report, op. cit.
- 23 Soyster, op. cit.
- 24 According to the US News and World Report, "US officials said that the plan calls for more than 100 former US military trainers and could cost as much as the operation in Bosnia." US News and World Report, op. cit.
- 25 See, <www.mpri.com/current/personnel.htm#afms>, 31 December 1998.
- 26 D Isenberg, Soldiers of Fortune Ltd.: A Profile of Today's Private Sector Corporate Mercenary Firms, Center for Defense Information Monograph, Washington DC, November 1997.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 28 Gaul, op. cit.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 The primary problem with the US arms export regime is that it requires congressional review of military service contracts only when a contract exceeds US \$50 million and there is no differentiation regarding the nature of the service or the type of equipment that is provided.