

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

CNN

Drunk contractors cause harm in Afghanistan, lawsuit alleges

By Dugald McConnell and Brian Todd

10/19/2012

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- The videos are part of a lawsuit by two former employees
- The company says it has made changes since the videos were made public
- "The Company is deeply concerned about any employee misconduct," Jorge Scientific say

The amateur video shows men, shirtless and seeming dangerously drunk, rolling on the ground or staggering near a counter top covered with booze bottles. Another part of the video shows a man babbling incoherently with a syringe nearby.

This is not a scene at a college frat house. It is a video of employees of an American security contractor working in Kabul, Afghanistan.

"It reminded me of times I'd visit my friends going to college that were in fraternities," said John Melson, a former employee of Jorge Scientific who was based at that villa in Kabul on assignment to support efforts to train Afghan security personnel.

The images in this video are now part of a lawsuit by two former employees of Jorge Scientific who allege that contractors with the firm were careless with their guns, abused local staffers,

wrecked cars, destroyed furniture, and often could not perform their duties due to drunkenness.

"This behavior actually was almost every other night," said Kenny Smith, another former employee there, who filmed the videos in January and February.

Smith and Melson have filed the lawsuit and cite an example of one night in February of 2012 where several employees were allegedly "heavily intoxicated and grabbing at each other's weapons and firing them in the air. "

In one of the videos, which were obtained by CNN, a raging bonfire burns in a pit. The lawsuit alleges that drunken revelers threw ammunition on the fire which exploded, causing a serious laceration on the brow of a local employee.

The result of the misconduct, it says, was undermanned security, missed work, and damage to relations with Afghan people and officials.

"Jorge employees were often too intoxicated to perform their duties," the lawsuit claims.

In a statement, Jorge Scientific said the behavior was "unacceptable" and added, "the Company is deeply concerned about any employee misconduct."

The firm has implemented a no-drinking policy as well as made management changes, a Jorge representative said. None of the people seen in the videos work for Jorge anymore, the firm says.

Jorge "pledges to fully investigate and correct any mistakes to preserve and continue its history of exemplary performance," the statement concluded.

But Jorge Scientific rejected the suggestion that work was compromised.

"The Company remains confident that the personal misconduct did not impact the Company's contract performance," the statement said.

David Scher, Smith and Melson's attorney, disagrees.

"These people were drunk beyond the point of incoherence, and could not possibly defend themselves if they were attacked," he said.

The company says the workers seen in the videos would not have been tasked with defending the compound, since they had administrative roles and support roles, rather than top security jobs.

But Scher disputes that and says the company is downplaying the roles of the men in the videos.

"That is a gross understatement of what these individuals did," said Scher. "These individuals are the security manager for the facility, and the operations manager for security for the entire country of Afghanistan for the company."

CNN was unable to reach either of those men, or another man, seen in the video, which was first reported on by ABC News.

The military is supposed to oversee such contractors, and the U.S. Army's Criminal Investigation Division is now looking into the allegations.

"The International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan take all allegations of inappropriate behavior by contractors and service members very seriously," said an ISAF spokesman.

But Danielle Brian, of the nonprofit watchdog group Project on Government Oversight, said she is concerned that the U.S. is relying too much on contractors, who work in miserable conditions, with too little oversight.

The kind of misconduct seen in the videos - even if rare - risks undermining the American mission in Afghanistan, she said.

"This is the kind of behavior that is making people in the area - Afghans - have more disregard for the Americans who are there," she said.