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Blackwater charged with stealing Afghan arms

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US private security firm Xe, formerly known as Blackwater, has been reportedly accused of stealing over 500 assault rifles earmarked for the Afghan police.

A US Senate committee has revealed the case, the Washington Post reported.

Meanwhile, two former Xe employees have accused Blackwater of over-billing for travel, charging for liquor, spa trips and other leisure activities.

The revelation comes after Pentagon Chief Robert Gates has pledged to review earlier allegations of Blackwater staff's misconduct in Afghanistan.

Earlier this week, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin said that the Pentagon should reconsider awarding contracts to the firm.

Levin was referring to a new contract worth as much as \$1 billion that would provide Afghan national police with training.

Levin said Blackwater may have misappropriated government weapons and carried arms without authorization, adding that the firm may have hired unqualified personnel with backgrounds that included drug and alcohol abuse.

Blackwater was thrown into the spotlight after five of its guards killed 14 Iraqi civilians and wounded 18 others during a September 2007 incident in Baghdad.