



The Central Intelligence Agency in 2004 hired outside contractors from the private security contractor Blackwater USA as part of a secret program to locate and assassinate top operatives of Al Qaeda, according to current and former government officials.

Executives from Blackwater, which has generated controversy because of its aggressive tactics in Iraq, helped the spy agency with planning, training and surveillance. The C.I.A. spent several million dollars on the program, which did not capture or kill any terrorist suspects.

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