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Lawnsuit: US Military Contractor DynCorp Accused of "Enslaving" American Employees in Kuwaiti Tent Cities

DynCorp's old habits of treating human beings as commodities remain as ingrained as ever, largely thanks to the fact that the company has never been held accountable for its crimes against its workers as well as countless children.

by *Whitney Webb*

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WASHINGTON — A recently unsealed lawsuit has accused two U.S. military contractors of treating American citizens working as military translators in the Middle East like “slaves.” The two contractors — DynCorp and its subcontractor, Global Linguist Solutions (GLS) — are alleged to have housed American translators in Kuwait within a poorly maintained tent city and to have threatened the workers with prison time if they tried to escape. The suit is the [second lawsuit](#) to be made public this year that accuses a prominent military contractor of treating its employees as slaves.

The 2016 federal lawsuit, [first reported on](#) by the *Daily Beast* after it was unsealed earlier this month, revolves around a contract signed between DynCorp and the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) to provide the U.S. military with English-Arabic translators. DynCorp then subcontracted GLS to recruit the translators and bring them to Kuwait where, upon arrival, GLS staff confiscated their passports, originally claiming that the seizure was essential to securing work visas for the translators. However, GLS secured only tourist visas for the translators, making their work technically illegal and placing them at risk of arrest. Yet, this was only the beginning of their troubles.

Translators were subsequently housed in dangerous conditions once in Kuwait, with many of them living in tent cities, such as Camp Ali al-Salem, that had originally been designed to shield



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Other tent cities, such as Camp Arifjan and Camp Buehring, became infested with rodents, lice



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because they couldn't go to the Kuwaiti authorities for assistance owing to the lack of a work visa — translators were essentially held against their will. When one translator tried to complain about the living situation to a GLS manager, the manager told him that “linguists are slaves.” Even the president of GLS, Ken Tolleson, told translators who had complained of their treatment that they “would all be fired and returned to the U.S. to ‘deliver pizzas.’”

After translators had complained, the suit alleges that GLS intentionally placed a number of plaintiffs in situations “where GLS knew that they were likely to be arrested.” The plaintiffs’ then alleged that “GLS did this to make a public example of linguists who strayed off the base and as a means of frightening other linguists to not attempt to leave their bases.”

Eventually, many of the translators did leave despite the risks. However, they soon learned that the Kuwaiti government had issued arrest warrants for working illegally, forcing them to confess to crimes they had never intended to commit. These translators were banned from entering Kuwait and other Gulf nations, greatly impairing their ability to work as translators in the region in the future.

Notably, the plaintiffs have claimed that their treatment by GLS and DynCorp was worse than anything they experienced serving alongside the U.S. military on the battlefield. According to



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also [told the *Daily Beast*](#) that DynCorp “will vigorously defend against these baseless allegations brought by plaintiffs seeking a payday.”

DynCorp: A sordid track record of crime and impunity

This troubling lawsuit is hardly the first controversy for the U.S. military contractor. Indeed, DynCorp is [one of the most controversial](#) military contractors, given its past scandals, many of which involved the company facilitating human trafficking and child prostitution. For instance, in the late 1990s, DynCorp employees [were accused](#) of raping children in Bosnia as well as buying and selling girls as young as 12 for use as sex slaves. They also assisted the illegal transport of women into Bosnia for human trafficking purposes.

In the years since, DynCorp [has continued](#) to find itself accused of enslaving minors as well as its contracted employees, just as the recently unsealed lawsuit alleged. For instance, evidence came out in 2004 showing DynCorp employees sexually assaulting underage girls in Colombia, followed by a separate incident in 2009 where company employees [provided](#) Afghan police with drugs and child prostitutes in Afghanistan.



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Top Photo | In this Dec. 16, 2011 photo, abandoned vehicles stand in a lot behind a barbed wire fence inside Camp Adder on the Iraq, Kuwait border. Lucas Jackson | AP

Whitney Webb is a staff writer for MintPress News and a contributor to Ben Swann's Truth in Media. Her work has appeared on Global Research, the Ron Paul Institute and 21st Century Wire, among others. She has also made radio and TV appearances on RT and Sputnik. She currently lives with her family in southern Chile.



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