

## Blackwater crushed car with three kids, old man to avoid traffic: former US official

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Filed by John Byrne

Janessa Gans, a visiting political science professor at Principia College who served as a US official in Iraq from 2003 to 2005, opened fire on the private security contractor Blackwater in Saturday's edition of the *Los Angeles Times*.

"When the Iraqi government last month demanded the expulsion of Blackwater USA, the private security firm, I had one reaction: It's about time," she begins in [an editorial](#).

Gans says she witnessed firsthand "over-the-top zeal" of the behemoth US mercenary force.

"We would careen around corners, jump road dividers, reach speeds in excess of 100 mph and often cross over to the wrong side of the street, oncoming traffic be damned," she writes. "I began to wonder whether my meetings, intended to further U.S. policy goals and improve the lives of Iraqis, were doing more harm than good. With our drivers honking at, cutting off, pelting with water bottles (a favorite tactic) and menacing with weapons anyone in their way, how many enemies were we creating?"

Gans describes a particularly "infuriating" incident where the lead Chevy Suburban in her convoy allegedly crashed into a sedan ferrying an older man, a young woman and three children.

"As we approached at typical breakneck speed, the Blackwater driver honked furiously and motioned to the side, as if they should pull over," she pens. "The kids in the back seat looked back in horror, mouths agape at the sight of the heavily armored Suburbans driven by large, armed men in dark sunglasses. The poor Iraqi driver frantically searched for a means of escape, but there was none. So the lead Blackwater vehicle smashed heedlessly into the car, pushing it into the barrier. We zoomed by too quickly to notice if anyone was hurt."

"Where do you all expect them to go?" she allegedly cried. "It was an old guy and a family, for goodness' sake. Was it necessary for them to destroy their poor old car?"



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"Ma'am, we've been trained to view anyone as a potential threat," she says the driver, who she did not identify, replied. "You don't know who they might use as decoys or what the risks are. Terrorists could be disguised as anyone."

"Well, if they weren't terrorists before, they certainly are now!" she says she replied.

According to Gans, the Pentagon's rules of engagement and the private security contractor's seeming indifference created a stark contrast for local Iraqis, who saw the US military as a more responsible force. "Blackwater seemed to have no such rules, paid no compensation and, per long-standing Coalition Provisional Authority fiat, had immunity from prosecution under Iraqi law."

"As we do the work of bridge building and improving our host citizens' lives, if the people providing our transportation and security are antagonizing, angering and even killing the people we are putatively trying to help, our entire mission is undermined," she concluded.

Founder and president of The Euphrates Institute, Gans also keeps a blog, "[Letters from the Sandbox](#)."