



Commission on Wartime Contracting
In Iraq and Afghanistan

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Wartime Contracting teams to do on-site investigation in Iraq, Afghanistan

ARLINGTON, VA, March 31, 2009 – Fifteen members and staff from the federal Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan have flown to the area to inspect work sites, review documents, conduct interviews, and participate in briefings as part of a 10-day investigative trip in the two war zones.

“We can do a lot of work with stateside interviews and computerized research,” said Commission Co-Chair Michael Thibault, “but there’s no substitute for first-hand investigation. There are about 200,000 contract employees working in Iraq and Afghanistan, outnumbering U.S. troops in the area. The unprecedented reliance on contractors in support of our foreign-policy and military objectives has been accompanied by many problems.”

Fellow Co-Chair Grant Green said, “Contractors perform important work in logistics, security, and reconstruction projects, but billions of taxpayer dollars assigned to contract work have been lost to waste, fraud, and abuse. Causes include poor contract drafting and weak oversight, abusive or incompetent companies, and instances of individual dishonesty in government, the military, and business.”

The Commission’s early-April investigative trip comprises three teams: one of Commissioners and their executive director; a seven-member team for Iraq; and a five-member team for Afghanistan. Team members, whose professional experience includes auditing, military, diplomatic, and management experience, have detailed agendas for topics, sites, and programs to investigate.

While in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Commission teams will meet with employees of the Departments of Defense and State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, members of the military, and representatives of companies providing goods and services under federal contracts. Those contracts include building schools, hospitals, and water-treatment plants; providing food and other services at military bases; and protecting diplomatic personnel and installations. Visit and meeting sites will include the national capitals of Baghdad and Kabul, as well as multiple provincial and district projects, and forward operating bases for military units.

Results of the teams’ work will be reflected in reports to Congress, in “lessons learned” research to improve future contracting, and in proposals for statutory and administrative changes to correct problems.

“Part of our job,” Thibault said, “is determine why some earlier contracting reforms haven’t

worked, and to look for ways to remove obstacles or try different approaches to change. Our troops, our policy objectives, and our taxpayers deserve better results from contract work than they've been getting."

The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan was created by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181). The CWC has a broad mandate to research and investigate federal-agency contracting for reconstruction, logistical support and security functions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The CWC will develop findings and recommendations on issues including the extent of reliance on contractors in wartime settings, contractor performance and accountability, federal contracting and management systems and practices, contractor use of force, and potential violations of law. The CWC will issue an interim report this spring and a final report in the summer of 2010; other reports will be issued as appropriate.

The law provides for eight appointed CWC commissioners to direct the staff's work and decide upon ultimate findings and recommendations. Besides Co-chairs Thibault and Green, the commissioners are Clark Kent Ervin, Robert Henke, Linda Gustitus, Charles Tiefer, and Dov Zakheim. There is currently one vacancy. The commissioners have a wide range of experience in government, law, military, education, and business.

Additional information appears at the Commission's Web site, www.wartimecontracting.gov.

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