



Commission on Wartime Contracting In Iraq and Afghanistan

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Wartime Contracting team headed to Afghanistan to examine contracts for training and reconstruction

ARLINGTON, VA, Aug. 21, 2009 – A team from the federal Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan will leave for Kabul on Sunday, Aug. 23, to gather information on the role of contractors in supporting the U.S. troop buildup, training Afghan security forces, and other U.S. operations in Afghanistan.

The six Commission team members will spend a week in Afghanistan. They will visit several of the U.S. military's forward operating bases and meet with senior military and diplomatic officials. Specific topics of interest will include training of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Police (ANP), reconstruction work in support of ANA and ANP requirements, use of field commanders' discretionary funds for local projects, supervision of armed security contractors, and operation of the multi-billion-dollar LOGCAP logistics-support contract in Afghanistan.

“This trip is an important part of carrying out our study mandate from Congress,” said Commission Co-Chair Michael J. Thibault, who will participate in the trip, “and it's especially important given that we're intensifying our efforts in Afghanistan. Among other things, we'll be looking to see whether and how contracting lessons from the Iraq involvement are being applied to Afghanistan.”

More than 200,000 contractor employees work to support the Departments of Defense and State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other U.S. agencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Contractor employees perform many of the duties that used to be carried out by military personnel — serving meals, driving trucks, maintaining vehicles, providing personal and facility security, and so on — and free up military personnel for more combat-related missions. Contractors account for a large share of spending: from 2001 through mid-2009, Congress has appropriated nearly \$890 billion for U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Definitive data are scarce, but the Commission's current estimate is that \$100 billion to \$150 billion of that total has gone to contractors.

Congress created the Commission in 2008 (Public Law 110-181) and directed it to research federal contracting for reconstruction, logistical support, and security functions, and to recommend improvements. The eight Commissioners are: Michael Thibault and Christopher Shays, co-chairs; and Clark Kent Ervin, Grant Green, Robert Henke, Linda Gustitus, Charles Tiefer, and Dov Zakheim. They are supported by 40 professional and administrative staff.

The Commission's Web site, www.wartimecontracting.gov, includes a link to an electronic copy of the Commission's June 2009 interim report to Congress, “At What Cost? Contingency Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan.” That report cited management of the Iraq drawdown and Afghan buildup among eight “issues of immediate concern”; others included weaknesses in contractors' business systems, shortages of federal contract-management professionals, and limited accountability for the use of subcontractors.

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