



**Commission on Wartime Contracting
In Iraq and Afghanistan**

Statement of Commissioner Clark Kent Ervin

**“Lessons from the Inspectors General:
Improving Wartime Contracting”**

**The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan
The Caucus Room, 325 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to begin by noting that I regard it as a high honor and a great privilege to have been appointed by the Speaker to this critically important position. And, it has been a pleasure to work with you, Mr. Chairman, and each of my fellow Commissioners since our inception, and I look forward to continuing our work together until we deliver our final report next year.

I commend the Senators from whom we've heard this morning for their leadership on the issue of wartime contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. And, of course, I commend each of the Inspectors General from whom we will be hearing for their dogged efforts not only to uncover past incidents of waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement, but, equally importantly, to devise recommendations that, if implemented, will ensure that these incidents are not repeated in the future. I know from my own experience as Inspector General of both the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security how vital such oversight is in correcting past mistakes and avoiding future ones. I especially commend the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, my longtime friend and fellow Texan, Stuart Bowen, and his team for the extraordinary work they have done over the years, which culminates today in the release of *Hard Lessons*. It is, without a doubt, the most comprehensive, insightful, and compelling account to date of how our government's contracting efforts in Iraq went awry. But, unless its lessons are taken to heart by policymakers and government managers today, it will be merely a history book, an unusually interesting and well-written history book to be sure, but a history book nonetheless.

It falls in large part to us Commissioners to ensure that the “hard lessons” that *Hard Lessons* teaches us are learned and applied once and for all. We are downsizing our presence in Iraq today, but at the same time we are scaling up our efforts in Afghanistan. If we are not careful, we will repeat the same mistakes there that we have made in Iraq. Indeed, we have seen some instances of this already.

Whether we like it or not, the fact is that America will be involved in contingent operations for the foreseeable future, and, no doubt, long after that. This being so, it is critical that we assess whether the United States government is properly structured to carry out the attendant logistical, reconstruction, and security functions. We must assess also whether our government has the

necessary resources to carry out these functions, including the key question of whether our reliance today on contractors has gone too far. I am especially concerned about the increasing privatization of war fighting and post-conflict reconstruction and development. But, it is not just a question of organization charts, and budgets, as important as they are. There is also the question of political will and filling key decision making slots with people who fervently believe that accomplishing our war fighting and post-conflict missions and eschewing waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement are not incompatible with each other, and that one imperative need not take precedence over the other.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of the estimable witnesses before us today and to listening to their answers to our questions.