

April 25, 2007

Opening Statement of Congressman Todd Akin
*Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee Hearing on the Use of Contractors for Training,
Equipping and Sustaining Iraqi Security Forces*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO), ranking Republican on the Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee, today released the following opening statement for the subcommittee’s hearing on the use of contractors for training, equipping and sustaining the Iraq Security Forces (ISF):

“Today’s hearing is this subcommittee’s second open meeting, and culminates two months of oversight activities aimed at investigating the Iraqi Security Forces. I’m pleased that today’s hearing will look at the important issue of how the U.S. government is using contractors to fulfill the critical mission of building the Iraqi Security Forces.

“Specifically, I’m interested in how we use contractors for training the Iraq Police Services. Over the course of this investigation, it has become increasingly clear to me that more attention needs to be devoted to the Iraqi Police and matters of rule of law in Iraq more generally. It is my understanding that contractors play an important role in how we train Iraqi police, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses how our government ensures that contractors effectively carry out this vital mission.

“The U.S. government’s reliance on contracts raises a second, related issue that has come up indirectly a number of times over the course of the investigation – I’m referring to the challenge of effective interagency participation in Iraq. Today’s hearing should shed light on how agencies other than the Department of Defense have, and continue, to contribute to the development of the ISF in particular, and improving the overall situation in Iraq. Winning this war requires the application of all elements of national power; we must be able to tap into the wide ranging expertise resident across the U.S. government.

“It seems to me that both the State and Justice Departments rely on contractors to carry out missions that reside within their area of expertise, at least with respect to training local police. I’d like our witnesses to comment on the rationale for this practice, and the benefits and drawbacks of using contractors in Iraq.

“Finally, I want to comment on one specific contract matter. Use of contractors in theatre is a complicated matter. When contractors embed in U.S. Police Transition Teams (PTTs), as in the case of the International Police Liaison Officers (IPLs), an already complicated matter turns into a matter of concern. I’m curious about the guidance we give these contractors with respect to command and control, personal security and logistical support. I look forward to our witnesses elaborating on this.”