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## Hearing on Private Security Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan

### Ambassador David M. Satterfield, Senior Advisor to the Secretary and Coordinator for Iraq

Statement Before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Washington, DC

October 2, 2007

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Chairman Waxman, Ranking Member Davis, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today and for the opportunity to speak to the vital security that private security firms provide to our State Department personnel. In Iraq, I have personally benefited from Blackwater and other private security details - as you know, I was the Deputy Chief of Mission in Baghdad from May 2005 until July 2006 and witnessed first hand their professionalism.

Contracting of security personnel for State Department officials is neither new nor unique to Iraq. For example, we have employed private PSDs in Haiti, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Israel and other countries. We do not bunker down in dangerous environments, but we do need to take prudent precautions to protect the safety and welfare of our personnel.

Of course, Iraq is a dangerous place. Yet, I think we can all agree that our diplomats and civilian personnel need to be able to operate alongside our military colleagues, and to have broad freedom of movement throughout Iraq. We must be able to interact with our Iraqi counterparts and with the Iraqi population, in general. Without PSDs we would not be able to interface with Iraqi government officials, institutions and other Iraqi civilians critical to our mission there.

The State Department uses multiple security specialists in Iraq. Furthermore, it should be noted that the State Department is not the sole client of these security companies. The U.S. military, Iraqi Government officials, private Iraqi citizens, independent institutions and NGOs and journalists all use private security firms, of which Blackwater is just one of many. A black suburban does not equal Blackwater.

Insofar as the State Department's security contractors in Iraq are concerned, we demand high standards and professionalism. Those standards include relevant prior experience, strict vetting, specified pre-deployment training, and in-country supervision. As you know, many of the individuals are veterans who have served honorably in

America's armed forces.

All Embassy Baghdad security contracts fall under the oversight of the Regional Security Office. The contracts require high standards covering areas ranging from conduct and demeanor, to use of force, to mission operational guidelines. These standards are written into the companies' contracts. These policies only allow for the use of force when absolutely necessary to address imminent and grave danger against those under their protection, themselves, and others.

In those rare instances when security contractors must use force, management officials at the Embassy conduct a thorough review to ensure that proper procedures were followed. In addition, we are in constant and regular contact with our Iraqi counterparts about those instances. The incident on September **16** is no exception.

We are conducting three different reviews.

**First**, as I stated before, the Embassy conducts regular reviews of every security incident. As such, we are conducting a thorough investigation into and review of the facts surrounding events on September 16.

**Second**, following direct communication between Secretary Rice and Prime Minister Maliki, our Embassy in Baghdad and the Prime Minister's office have established a joint Government of Iraq and United States Government Commission of Inquiry to examine issues of security and safety related to U.S. Government-affiliated PSD operations. This will also include a review of the effect of CPA Order 17 on such operations. The Joint Commission will make policy recommendations for resolving any problems it discovers.

**Third**, the Secretary has directed Ambassador Patrick Kennedy, a very senior and extremely capable Department management officer, to carry out a full and complete review of security practices for our diplomats in Iraq. His review will address the question of how we are providing security to our employees, taking into account all aspects of this protection, including rules of engagement, and under what jurisdiction they should be covered. He is currently in Baghdad with some of his team. In addition to Ambassador Kennedy, this team includes General George Joulwan, Ambassador Stapleton Roy, and Ambassador Eric Boswell. It is an extraordinarily well-qualified team with experience directly relevant to the inquiry.

We are fully committed to working with both our security specialists and the Iraqi government to ensure the safety of U. S. Government personnel. Both are and will be essential to our success.

With that, Assistant Secretary Griffin, Deputy Assistant Secretary Moser and I are happy to take your questions.

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