

Chairman Russ Carnahan
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

Opening Statement

“Oversight: Hard Lessons Learned in Iraq and Benchmarks for Future Reconstruction Efforts”

February 24, 2010

The International Organizations Subcommittee will come to order. I want to thank Stuart Bowen, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, for testifying. He has undertaken an enormous task, and I thank him for his service.

With over \$50 billion in U.S. taxpayer funds spent for Iraq reconstruction through FY 2010, there are a number of lessons learned. Some money was spent properly, but far too much was wasted, misspent, or wholly mismanaged. There have been numerous examples of poor accountability and inadequate procurement processes, just to name a few of the problems.

With reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, Haiti, and others sure to take place, we need to ensure that we take the lessons learned in Iraq, and turn the corner. While there is certainly no “one size fits all,” we need to make sure that there is a process in place that meets not only our goals of reconstruction, oversight, and accountability, but also one that ensures we are meeting our development and diplomacy goals, as well.

Mr. Bowen has put forward a proposal that seeks to answer the question of who should be accountable for planning, managing, and executing stabilization and reconstruction operations that are part of an overseas contingency operation.

This question is being asked because there was not coordinated U.S. government approach to reconstruction operations, which has resulted in, among other things, mismanagement of US taxpayer funds.

I am very interested in hearing you testify about your proposal today. I am especially interested in hearing how your proposed U.S. Office for Contingency Operations would increase effectiveness and accountability while dramatically decreasing instances of waste, fraud and abuse.

I am also interested in hearing how this proposal would enhance our diplomacy and development goals. When Secretary Clinton announced the inaugural QDDR this past July, she indicated that it would provide a “comprehensive assessment for organizational reform and improvements to our policy, strategy, and planning processes” with respect to diplomacy and development – or “smart power” – specifically. Diplomacy and development are essential to any reconstruction operation, so I am interested to also hear how these goals can be met with your proposal.

Again, Mr. Bowen, I want to thank you for your work on these issues, and for your willingness to testify. I would now like to invite the ranking member, Mr. Rohrabacher from California, to give his opening remarks.