



## **Wartime Contracting Commission team in Iraq to examine issues with private security contractors**

ARLINGTON, VA, May 14, 2010 – A team of commissioners and staff from the independent federal Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan has arrived in Iraq for an extended examination of issues with the use and oversight of private security contractors. Commission staff will also be briefed on overall contracting practices supporting the U.S. military drawdown in Iraq.

Thousands of private security contractor employees work in Iraq for the Departments of Defense and State, and for the U.S. Agency for International Development. Working for companies like Aegis, DynCorp, and Triple Canopy, private security contractors guard convoys, protect forward military bases, provide personal protection, and train Iraqi security personnel. Although considered non-combatants, they are generally armed and authorized to use force in their duties.

“American taxpayers are paying for billions of dollars’ worth of services from private security contractors,” said commission Co-Chair Michael Thibault, “but there are a lot of troubling questions about contract management and oversight, use of force, interagency coordination, use of subcontractors, and transition planning as the United States prepares to exit Iraq. We’ll be looking at all of them to add to the knowledge gained from our stateside research and public hearings.”

The team of two commissioners and six staff will meet with security officials from State, USAID, and Defense, as well as representatives of the Iraqi government and security contractors. The team’s seven-day agenda in Iraq includes meetings in Baghdad and at military bases in the countryside.

Apart from coordination and cost issues, the Commission on Wartime Contracting is looking at private security contracting as part of its mandate to examine inherently governmental functions. “There’s a vigorous debate in policy circles whether or to what extent security can or should be contracted out in combat zones,” said Co-Chair Christopher Shays. “As we saw in 2007 at Nisur Square in Baghdad, when private security guards killed or wounded 34 Iraqi civilians, contractor incidents can have a direct and devastating effect on United States objectives and public support for our presence. At the same time, properly managed contractors can reduce the strain on U.S. military personnel.”

Information gathered during the Iraq trip will help shape commission recommendations for statutory or administrative changes on contingency contracting, and will contribute to framing the final report to Congress that is due in summer 2011.

Congress created the Commission in 2008 (Public Law 110-181) to examine contingency contracting for reconstruction, logistics, and security functions, and to recommend improvements. Co-chairs are Michael Thibault and Christopher Shays; other members are Clark Kent Ervin, Grant Green, Robert Henke, Katherine Schinasi, Charles Tiefer, and Dov Zakheim. The Commission website is [www.wartimecontracting.gov](http://www.wartimecontracting.gov).