



Wartime Contracting team checking security and logistics issues during Afghan trip

ARLINGTON, VA, Aug. 9, 2010 – The federal Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan (CWC) has sent a six-member team into Afghanistan to examine contracting for logistics and security as U.S. troop strength in the country builds toward the 100,000 level.

The team is flying into Kabul today for a week of site visits, meetings, and briefings on issues including opportunities for cost savings, oversight of private security contractors, and the adequacy of the federal contract-management structure in Afghanistan.

“The Department of Defense alone has more than 110,000 contractor employees in Afghanistan,” said Commission Co-Chair Michael Thibault, “and thousands more work for the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Their numbers, plus the fact that most are non-U.S. nationals, create an enormous challenge for contract management and oversight half-way around the world.”

Thibault said the Commission trip will reinforce information from research and hearings for use in a set of proposals for statutory and administrative changes to be issued in December, and for the CWC’s final report to Congress in July 2011. The trip includes visits to U.S. bases, State and USAID facilities, and contractor sites, and meetings with U.S. military and diplomatic officials, contract managers and auditor, an international anti-corruption task force, and reconstruction teams.

Co-chair Christopher Shays added, “We’ll be looking at everything from coordinating arrangements with our NATO allies to promoting competition for logistical-support contracts.” Key points of interest will include the challenges of auditing contractor performance and investigating corruption in a remote setting with unique cultural expectations and business practices; the quality of planning for contracts and of specifying required work; and the difficulties of planning for and managing private security contractors, who are essential to U.S. missions, but whose work can cross into areas normally restricted to performance by government employees.

“American contingency operations in Afghanistan will end someday,” Shays said, “but in the meantime, we’re convinced that a lot can be done to get more effective and economical contractor support, and to extract lessons to improve the conduct of future operations.”

Congress created the Commission in 2008 (Public Law 110-181) to examine contingency contracting for reconstruction, logistics, and security functions, and to recommend improvements. Its final report to Congress is due in July 2011. 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’s executive director is Robert Dickson; its website is www.wartimecontracting.gov.