

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 12, 2007

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

We are writing to express our concern that endemic corruption in Iraq may be fueling the insurgency, endangering our troops, and undermining the chances for success. We are equally concerned that the refusal of State Department officials to answer questions about the extent of corruption in the government of Iraq undermines our ability to work together to eliminate this source of support for the insurgency and to enhance our chances of success in Iraq.

Last week, leading experts described corruption in the Iraqi government as a widespread problem that is imperiling our mission, but that is not being effectively addressed. Stuart Bowen, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, testified before the Oversight Committee on October 4, 2007, that the “rising tide of corruption in Iraq” is “a second insurgency” that “stymies the construction and maintenance of Iraq’s infrastructure, deprives people of goods and services, reduces confidence in public institutions, and potentially aids insurgent groups reportedly funded by graft derived from oil smuggling or embezzlement.” David Walker, the Comptroller General of the United States, made similar statements, testifying that “widespread corruption undermines efforts to develop the government’s capacity by robbing it of needed resources, some of which are used to fund the insurgency.”

Judge Radhi Hamza al-Radhi, the former Commissioner of the Iraqi Commission on Public Integrity, also testified on October 4, 2007, that “corruption in Iraq today is rampant across the government, costing tens of billions of dollars, and has infected virtually every agency and ministry, including some of the most powerful officials in Iraq,” that “the Ministry of Oil [is] effectively financing terrorism,” and that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki “has protected some of his relatives that were involved in corruption.”

The Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, chaired by General James L. Jones, U.S.M.C. (Ret.), reported similar concerns on September 6, 2007, writing that “sectarianism and corruption are pervasive in the MOI [Ministry of Interior] and cripple the ministry’s ability to accomplish its mission to provide internal security of Iraqi citizens.”

At the October 4, 2007, hearing, the State Department witness, Ambassador Lawrence Butler, was asked whether “the Government of Iraq currently has the political will or the capability to root out corruption within its Government,” whether “the Maliki Government is working hard to improve the corruption situation so that he can unite his country,” and whether Prime Minister Maliki “obstructed any anticorruption investigations in Iraq to protect his political allies.” Ambassador Butler refused to answer because “questions which go to the broad

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nature of our bilateral relationship with Iraq are best answered in a classified setting.” He did, however, answer questions that portrayed the Iraqi government positively.

The State Department has taken other steps to suppress information about the extent of corruption within the Maliki government. We have learned that, on September 25, 2007, the State Department instructed officials not to answer questions in an open setting that ask for “Broad statements/assessments which judge or characterize the quality of Iraqi governance or the ability/determination of the Iraqi government to deal with corruption, including allegations that investigations were thwarted/stifled for political reasons.” The Department also retroactively classified two important reports on corruption in Iraq that had been distributed widely as “sensitive but unclassified.”

Incredibly, the State Department even retroactively classified portions of a report on Iraqi corruption and ministry capacity that Comptroller General Walker released at last week’s hearing and that had previously been cleared for release by the State Department.

It may be reasonable to classify some information containing allegations about specific individuals in the Iraqi government, but the wholesale and even retroactive classification of all information is wrong and a misuse of the official classification procedures. It will undermine our ability to work together to find solutions to this significant problem. Over 3,800 of our bravest men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq, and over 28,000 have been injured. Over \$450 billion has been appropriated to fund the Iraq War, and the President is asking for over \$150 billion more.

The American people and Congress deserve honest answers about the extent of corruption in the Maliki government and whether corruption is fueling the insurgency and endangering our troops. It is essential that we know whether entrenched corruption threatens the ability of the Maliki government to succeed.

We urge you to reconsider these misguided directives so that we can work together to find solutions to the corruption that may well be funding attacks on our troops.

Sincerely,



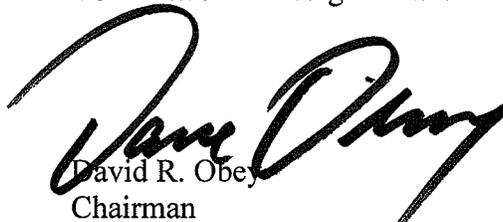
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