

Testimony of Patrick F. Kennedy
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United States House of Representatives
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Chairman Waxman, Ranking Member Davis, members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

I first want to offer you the perspective of someone who has served at the Embassy in Baghdad. I want to emphasize the importance of the New Embassy Compound for the safety of our employees in Baghdad.

I recently became the Director of the Office of Management Policy in the State Department. As one of my key duties, I have been charged by Secretary Rice, Deputy Secretary Negroponte, and Under Secretary for Management Fore with ensuring that Ambassador Ryan Crocker has everything he needs within reason in terms of management support.

Now let me turn directly to the subject of this hearing. I want to underline the distinction made by General Williams between the guard camp project in Baghdad and the New Embassy Compound (NEC) project. They are completely separate both physically and contractually. The camp is temporary and largely a trailer park while the NEC is a group of permanent buildings.

I have recently been in Baghdad and also communicate regularly with Ambassador Crocker. I have also been meeting regularly with Chuck Williams. There is a quality assurance process in place, and there will be a vigorous inspection procedure prior to our acceptance of the NEC as there is for all our New Embassy Compounds.

On the guard camp, I view the exchange of cables between the Embassy and OBO as part of the creative tension in getting a project right. There were problems, but they are problems that First Kuwaiti is fixing as part of the process of accepting the guard camp. This is a standard punch list procedure that occurs on any of our construction projects.

I would happy to answer any questions.