

House Armed Services Committee

Ike Skelton, Chairman

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OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

Washington, DC – Subcommittee Chairman Martin Meehan and Ranking Member Todd Akin of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee released the following joint statement following today’s subcommittee hearing on the development of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF):

“When the dust settles in Iraq, historians and scholars will not ask how many Iraqis we trained and equipped; they will ask whether we left behind an effective government with a capable force to secure the Iraqi people. Over the past several months, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations has held nine briefings and hearings on the development of the Iraqi Security Forces for a detailed examination of this effort. Today’s hearing serves as the capstone for our work.

“While useful in many ways, this hearing reflected the difficulties we have experienced over the course of this investigation. We have heard many times now about the numbers of Iraqis trained and equipped, which supposedly represents ‘progress’ toward an Iraq that is less reliant on U.S. forces to provide security. Today’s witness, Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey, who has just returned from his tour as the Commander of the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, was certainly well positioned to speak about the training portion of the mission. Unfortunately, we were unable to hear from one of the commanders who oversees the operations of the Iraqi Security Forces. This would have allowed us to gain insight into the Iraqis’ performance in the field.

“This is the critical element of our work. It is the combat effectiveness of the Iraqi Army that will allow them to undertake a greater share of the fight against the insurgency in Iraq, not the number of soldiers we train. Likewise, it is the competence and trustworthiness of the Iraqi Police that will lead to the restoration of normalcy on Iraq’s volatile streets, not how many weapons we have purchased and provided for them.

“We sincerely hope that the Department of Defense will begin to do a better job of relating to Congress and the American people how things are going on the ground in Iraq, and how the Iraqis are performing. We must work together to ensure that the U.S. is doing everything it can to improve the ISF and achieve a prompt and effective transition of security responsibility to the Iraqis. By the end of June, the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee will complete its report on the development of the Iraqi Security Forces to this point, which we hope will contribute to public debate and help improve our policy.”