

STATEMENT BY THOMAS BRUNI
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BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

July 30, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Tom Bruni. I am the Theater Engineering and Construction Manager for KBR in Baghdad in support of U.S. and Coalition troops in Iraq. I am here today to assist the Committee in its inquiry regarding the maintenance of electrical systems in facilities occupied by U.S. military and contractor personnel in Iraq.

The Committee's inquiry focuses on the deaths and injuries of military personnel in Iraq as a result of electrical incidents. I would like to begin my remarks by expressing on behalf of KBR our deepest sympathy to all of the families and friends who have lost loved ones in Iraq.

It is important to honor these soldiers by examining the circumstances surrounding their untimely deaths, and KBR is completely committed to assisting in this process. While, from everything we presently know, KBR's actions were not the cause of any of these terrible accidents, that does not diminish the grief we share for these brave servicemen and women as well as the thousands of other members

of our military and contractors who have died. I hope that my testimony today will help the Committee answer its questions about this important issue.

I am a civil engineer by training and a former member of the United States Marine Corps and the Army National Guard. I have also served as Director of Engineering for Northeastern University and as the Director of Capital Projects Management for Boston College.

I first joined KBR in 2005 as a Deputy Project Manager in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. I am now the Theater Engineering and Construction Manager. In both positions, I have had extensive experience in engineering and construction efforts as part of KBR's responsibilities under the LOGCAP contract. In my current position, I have oversight responsibility for LOGCAP personnel who conduct maintenance and repair of electrical systems in Iraq.

KBR is one of many contractors providing support to U.S. and Coalition personnel in Iraq. KBR provides various support services under the LOGCAP contract, which the government awarded to KBR in December 2001 following a competitive bidding process. Under LOGCAP, the Army uses task orders to authorize and direct work from KBR on an as-needed basis. The task orders for work in Iraq are

not fixed price. Specific to today's hearing, KBR has varying levels of responsibility for maintenance and repair of electrical systems at facilities in Iraq.

The current environment in Iraq presents many unique maintenance challenges. Many U.S. military personnel and contractors currently occupy facilities that were built during Saddam Hussein's reign and contain electrical, plumbing, and other systems that were installed prior to the Coalition occupation of Iraq. Needless to say, the electrical systems in these buildings were not installed according to the standards that are followed in the United States. In addition, many buildings have electrical systems that are not customary in the United States. In fact, many would be considered substandard in the United States, and many of these components were installed in a way that we in the United States would consider inferior. Given the current situation in Iraq, where maintenance efforts must take into account substandard electrical infrastructure and the realities of operating in a war zone, KBR is even more acutely aware of electrical safety concerns.

A number of electrical shock incidents have recently gained increased attention in the media and in Congress. There are reports that as many as fifteen soldiers have been killed by electrical shocks in Iraq. These reports have raised awareness about

the issue of electrical safety. To truly understand this issue, one must have a clear and meaningful discussion about the facts of the various reported incidents.

Simply stated, the media reports about electrical shocks have contained a number of factual errors and inaccuracies. For example, a number of articles have suggested that KBR was in some way responsible for all fifteen electrocutions. The reality is that KBR's actions were not the cause of any of these terrible accidents. Only one of the fifteen incidents even occurred at a facility where KBR had maintenance responsibility. To assist the Committee in its inquiry, I would like to describe KBR's understanding of three specific incidents that have received considerable media coverage – as I mentioned, only one of these incidents occurred at a facility where KBR had some maintenance responsibility.

In one reported incident, a soldier at a military base near Bayji was killed in 2004 after being electrocuted while taking a shower in his dormitory. The media has incorrectly suggested that KBR had responsibility for electrical systems in connection with that incident. In fact, at the time of that tragic event, KBR did not have any maintenance responsibility for the dormitories at that base. After the soldier died, the Army asked KBR to refurbish electrical systems in the dormitories, which KBR did.

In a second reported incident, from what we understand, a soldier was killed while power washing a vehicle in a military-controlled motor pool at Camp Al Taqqadum. Media reports have again incorrectly suggested that KBR was responsible for electrical maintenance in connection with this incident. Though KBR did have a presence elsewhere at Camp Al Taqqadum at the time of the soldier's death, KBR had no responsibility for maintenance of the power washer, the motor pool, or the generator that supplied power to the motor pool.

As I mentioned, KBR did have as-directed maintenance responsibilities at one of the facilities where a soldier died from an electrical shock in January 2008. I would like to explain in some detail what KBR now knows about that incident and the steps taken since that event occurred.

The Radwaniyah Palace Complex, RPC, which consists of roughly 200 buildings, was built and controlled by Saddam Hussein's regime until occupied by the U.S. military. The military decided to use the existing facilities for housing and other purposes. Staff Sergeant Ryan Maseth was living in a small, one-level building at RPC now known as LSF-1. There were two other people living in the building with him – one other Army staff sergeant and an Iraqi interpreter. At the time that

KBR was first tasked with any maintenance of this building in 2006, all of the electrical systems and equipment had already been installed, though KBR does not know when or by whom. KBR's maintenance responsibility at that time was limited to repairs only at the direction of the Army.

It is important to understand how the Army categorizes maintenance responsibilities. Under the LOGCAP contract, the Army directs KBR to perform different levels of maintenance service at various facilities throughout Iraq. In some facilities, KBR provides Level-A maintenance service, in which KBR is authorized to perform maintenance and repairs without specific instruction from the Army. In other facilities, KBR provides Level-B maintenance service. At Level-B facilities, KBR performs repairs only when specifically directed to do so by the Army. The decision to classify any building at a specific level is a decision made by the Army, at its own discretion.

In February 2007, when the Army transferred KBR's maintenance role at RPC from the CENTCOM contract to the LOGCAP contract, KBR conducted a technical inspection of LSF-1. When the Army puts buildings under the LOGCAP structure, KBR conducts inspections to assess the conditions and costs of repairs

for buildings. The Army then determines the level of service required for buildings. For this building, the Army directed KBR to provide Level-B service under LOGCAP. This means that, for this building, KBR was not authorized to perform repairs without specific direction from the Army.

The February 2007 electrical inspection of this building identified a number of deficiencies and was turned over to the military. However, the Army did not authorize KBR to repair the identified electrical deficiencies. In November 2007, at the Army's request, KBR again produced the same February 2007 inspection when the Army was evaluating increased housing needs as a result of the surge; once again, the Army did not authorize KBR to make the repairs.

It is my understanding that the Army now believes that Staff Sergeant Maseth's death was the result of a malfunctioning water pump on the roof of his building. Though we cannot be certain who installed the water pump, we do know that KBR did not do so, and that it was most likely Iraqi-installed – we have been told that the water pump contained camel-hair string in place of teflon tape, which is a practice frequently used by local Iraqi workers.

At the direction of the Army, KBR has subsequently performed additional inspections in the LSF-1 building, as well as other buildings throughout RPC. In an effort to ensure that electrical systems are as safe as possible, KBR has also conducted, at the Army's direction, inspections of all occupied hardstand buildings in Iraq.

In the Committee's invitation to testify, you also requested information regarding reports of electrical fires at three locations in Iraq: Fallujah, Al Asad, and Speicher. With respect to the fire at Fallujah, if you are referring to the fire that occurred in June 2008 at an entry control point into Fallujah, KBR does not have any maintenance responsibilities for that entry control point.

With respect to the fires at Al Asad and Speicher, KBR operated the dining facilities that caught fire at each site in 2006. The fire at Al Asad did not result in any fatalities, while the fire at Speicher tragically claimed the lives of a KBR employee and a KBR sub-contractor employee. At Al Asad, the military secured the site before KBR had an opportunity to review the evidence on-site. At Speicher, KBR investigated the incident, but no definitive cause of the fire was determined.

As I have described, KBR views safety as a top priority and will continue to pursue the highest level of safety throughout Iraq. I hope that my testimony has aided the Committee in understanding these issues, and I will do my best to answer any questions you have.

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