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April 4, 2006

The Honorable Henry J. Hyde
Chairman
House International Relations Committee
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We write today to respectfully request Committee hearings in the near future regarding United States efforts to reconstruct Iraq and charges of waste, fraud and abuse related to the Iraq reconstruction program.

Mr. Chairman, the reconstruction of Iraq cannot be achieved overnight, nor is it an easy task. But given the billions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer funds now flowing to Iraq each year, it is imperative that the Congress conduct careful oversight over Iraq reconstruction funds to ensure that they are producing tangible results that benefit the Iraqi people and are being spent in an open and transparent manner. However, recent reports by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) have cast grave doubts on the results and effectiveness of the United States reconstruction plan. In particular, the reports indicate that, since President Bush declared the end of major combat operations almost three years ago,

- more than 75% of oil and gas reconstruction projects begun with United States assistance remain incomplete;
- more than 50% of electricity reconstruction projects are still unfinished; and
- approximately 40% of water and sanitation reconstruction projects remain incomplete.

The slow pace of Iraqi reconstruction, and the misuse of U.S. and Iraqi funds, has serious repercussions for American troops in Iraq and our efforts to build a successful democracy in that nation. Insurgents have capitalized on popular anger to build their own political, financial, and military support, and the faith of some Iraqi citizens in their government has been undermined. American funds wasted on certain reconstruction projects could also have been spent instead on better protecting American troops and providing training for their Iraqi counterparts.

Moreover, the corruption and incompetence surrounding the rebuilding of Iraq has badly damaged America's image, not just in Iraq, but throughout the world. Our nation's reputation for honesty, efficiency, and good government has been badly tarnished and respect for our power has been undermined. The GAO has reported that anti-Americanism is spreading and deepening, opening windows of opportunity for terrorists and making U.S. public diplomacy efforts more difficult.

If the Committee is to fulfill its constitutional obligation to engage in effective oversight of the Executive Branch, a full and complete investigation into Iraq reconstruction efforts is absolutely essential. As the Committee has not held any hearings thus far on Iraq, we would therefore request that the Committee hold a series of hearings with Administration and private sector witnesses to fully examine the recent reports of the SIGIR and other charges of waste, fraud and abuse in the Iraq reconstruction program, as it is currently being managed and previously under the aegis of the Coalition Provisional Authority. These hearings will allow us to determine what, if any, changes are required in United States reconstruction efforts to improve their effectiveness and efficiency, and give the American people the confidence that their elected leaders are taking their oversight responsibilities seriously.

Thank you in advance for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

TOM LANTOS
Member of Congress

HOWARD L. BERMAN
Member of Congress

GARY L. ACKERMAN
Member of Congress

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