Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 4, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush
The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to request that your administration provide all the expertise and resources required to support the United Nations (UN) investigation of the Iraq Oil-for-Food program (OFF). Security Council Resolution 1538 (2004) calls on member states "to cooperate fully by all appropriate means with the inquiry." U.S. government personnel with significant experience in the investigation of financial crimes could make important contributions to the work of the UN's international panel headed by former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker.

For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) already has agents and technical staff in Iraq who could help locate and secure OFF records. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which inherited Oil-for-Food operations, had directed Iraqi ministries to identify and maintain those records. However, due to an apparent conflict between the CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council over the exercise of audit authority, actual review of the records has been delayed for weeks. Some believe those important documents are at risk of being altered or destroyed.

At a minimum, steps should be taken immediately to insure the UN has access to all pertinent records and that review of the documents is coordinated with concurrent investigations by the Iraqi Governing Council, its successor, and the Congress. Additional FBI assets should be dedicated to the investigation, and the Department of Treasury Financial Crime Enforcement Network (FinCEN) should be made available, if requested by Mr. Volcker and his colleagues. A further resource could be the U.S. Secret Service, which is responsible for investigating financial crimes, including money laundering activities.

In our capacities as chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee charged with funding U.S. contributions to the United Nations and as chairman of the Government Reform subcommittee with oversight purview of international relations, respectively, we believe a prompt and thorough accounting of all Oil-for-Food transactions is essential to address serious allegations that the program was corrupted by the actions of the Saddam Hussein regime, by the complicity of other nations and companies, by lax oversight by the Security Council, and even by improper actions of United Nations personnel.

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It also is our belief that the other nations involved in the investigation of the OFF should make available their respective intelligence and law enforcement agencies so that the probe remains international and credible.

We should do everything possible to give the Iraqi people a true accounting of all OFF transactions and decision-making. We owe it to them – and the world – to find out the truth.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Frank R. Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, State, Judiciary and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations

Christopher Shays
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security,
Emerging Threats, and International
Relations
Committee on Government Reform