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SCHAKOWSKY AMENDMENT ON MILITARY CONTRACTOR OVERSIGHT INCLUDED IN DEFENSE BILL

ADDRESSES OVERCHARGES, BACKGROUND CHECKS, HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

WASHINGTON, DC - US Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today won bipartisan support for an amendment that mandates tougher oversight and accountability for the second largest military force in Iraq, US-hired contractors. Under the new rules set forth by the Schakowsky amendment, the estimated \$50 billion, 20, 000 person plus force will be subject to more oversight and accountability.

"Now that we are more than three years into the Iraq war, this amendment gives members of Congress new tools to exercise our oversight responsibilities on what has become a major component of our military, and to clarify the role of contractors," Schakowsky said. "Private contractors serve side by side with our troops, and are paid with billions of US taxpayer dollars, so the rules governing their conduct need to be clear, uniform and tough," she continued.

The Schakowsky amendment would: require an Inspector General report on contractor overcharges, establish a background check system for foreign nationals hired for work on US contracts, prevent contractors from hiring felons and human rights abusers, make retroactive 2005 contractor rules so that they cover all active contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and requires sufficient contractor oversight officers to review contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"This amendment is a significant step forward in requiring more oversight and accountability in the contracting process, but we have a lot more work to do," she concluded.

With passage of the House bill, Schakowsky and others stated their intent to work with the Senate as the DOD bill progresses toward enactment. Schakowsky also announced her intention to soon introduce stand-alone legislation to address additional contractor issues.

Schakowsky's full statement is below

"I want to begin by thanking Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton, and their Armed Services Committee staffs, for working with me to bring this amendment about military

contractors to the floor.

"My amendment would provide for additional oversight and accountability of Department of Defense contractors deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Contractors compose the second largest force in Iraq after the U.S. military.

"This amendment does not attempt to make a statement on the decision to use contractors, or on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now that we are more than three years into the Iraq war, this amendment is intended to give members of Congress new tools so that we can exercise our oversight responsibilities on what has become a major component of our military, and to clarify the role of contractors.

"We can all acknowledge that military contractors require the same stringent accountability and oversight standards as the U.S. military. After all, private contractors often serve side by side with our brave troops, and these same United States troops are often tasked to protect our contractors, who are paid with billions of US taxpayer dollars.

"This amendment would help to provide increased accountability and oversight for our Defense Department contractors by first implementing a policy for conducting comprehensive background checks on foreign nationals hired by our contractors. We want to know who these individuals are, and what their backgrounds are, and if they are suitable for that role.

"The amendment also prohibits the hiring of any person who has been convicted of a violent crime or a human rights violation. Second, it makes retroactive new DOD rules for contractors, on contracts already in existence, on any contract extension. For example, these new rules make it perfectly clear that combatant commanders are in charge. It outlines carefully the relationship between combat commanders and contractors so that there is a structure of command and a chain of command.

"The combatant commander would determine what type of uniforms contractors could wear, or whether or not they can carry a gun, and that they have to respond to the combatant commander. It would also say that any employee of a contractor would have to follow the laws of the host country, international law, and US law.

"Third, it requires a DOD Inspector General report on contractor overcharges. The amendment also requires that there are sufficient contracting officers assigned to monitor contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I hope that in the future I can continue to work with Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton to address additional oversight issues regarding the use of military contractors. I also hope that we continue to consider the impact that utilizing contractors has on our military. And I would also like to consider additional means to make it easier for members of Congress to see Defense Department contracts, so we can better monitor them for signs of waste, fraud, and abuse.

"Again, I thank Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton. I appreciate your support for, and attention to, this important issue. I yield back my time. Thank you Mr. Speaker."