**Ranking Member Moulton Opening Remarks – As Prepared**

**House Armed Services Committee – Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

**Hearing: “Evaluating DOD Equipment and Uniform Procurement in Iraq and Afghanistan”**

**July 25, 2017**

Thank you, Chairwoman Hartzler and thank you to all of our witnesses. I’d also like to take a moment to recognize the newest member of our subcommittee, Representative Jimmy Panetta. As a former Naval Intelligence Officer who served in Afghanistan as well as former Deputy District Attorney, we are fortunate to have his expertise on the subcommittee.

Today we’re addressing findings from the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, the Department of Defense’s Inspector General, and the Government Accountability Office that should alarm us all.

Mr. Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, has determined that our Department of Defense wasted tens of millions of dollars in a grant to the Afghan National Army to purchase uniforms with a camouflage pattern that doesn’t work for 97% of Afghanistan. There are appropriate, desert patterns DOD could have sourced at much lower cost.

This reminds me of when we were in the Kuwaiti desert days before the invasion of Iraq, and we were issued our chemical weapons suits—in green camouflage, similar to these uniforms now worn by the Afghan National Army. This was back in the “Axis of Evil” days and so we joked that they must be saving the desert ones for Korea.

You would think we would have learned from our mistakes, but several years later, DOD failed in basic supervision and oversight to ensure this didn’t happen again. We can’t count how many Afghan soldiers’ lives may have already been lost due to inappropriate camouflage, but we can account for how many American taxpayer dollars have been wasted—and it’s a lot of money: estimated between $26 and $28 million wasted.

In response to this investigation, the House Armed Services Committee has acted and included a provision in the FY18 NDAA that would require DOD to perform both cost and requirements analyses before awarding any new contract for uniforms in Afghanistan. It’s designed to ensure this particular mistake never happens again, but I want to ensure this oversight body hears from you about whether you believe that’s the case, whether it’ll work, and whether there’s more we should be doing. We need to get to the bottom of what went wrong. I can’t tell you what I could do with $26 million in my district.

I’d also like to hear your thoughts on what we should do now that we’ve bought these uniforms for Afghan forces and whether or not it makes sense to use additional taxpayer funds to buy replacements.

It’s easy to conclude that the Defense Department did not subject this decision to sufficient supervision or oversight, but it’s also important to say that DOD regularly complains that Congress imposes onerous reporting requirements and other oversight measures that take too much time, require too much bureaucracy, and hurt the operational efficiency of our military. We don’t want to do that, but these are the kinds of situations that demand it.

Therefore, we want to better understand how these decisions were made and the broader policy changes you would recommend to prevent these outrageous mistakes in the future. In the absence of good answers, we will demand stricter oversight, and we will get into the weeds. My hope is that we can eventually gain the confidence that DOD will prevent the massive waste of taxpayer dollars in the future without requiring us to impose more bureaucratic oversight on daily operations.

The second set of findings should concern us even more. If we’re not adequately tracking and securing the weapons and equipment we send to our allies in Iraq, that endangers the critical efforts of the Iraqi security forces to defeat ISIS and ensure they are able to stabilize the country after combat operations are complete.

Both the Department of Defense’s own Inspector General as well as the GAO have concluded serious shortcomings remain in our ability to sufficiently track and account for the weapons and other hardware we are providing via the Iraq Train and Equip Fund or “ITEF.” More specifically, the GAO found the Department of Defense maintains only “limited visibility and accountability over equipment funded by ITEF” and that a key tracking system is “not consistently capturing key transportation dates of ITEF equipment.”

I have been responsible myself for delivering weapons, equipment, and ammunition to Iraqi Security Forces. My team and I maintained strict accountability of what was delivered and showed up to inspect their delivery. We held our Iraqi leaders accountable and made them sign for everything, following up with other inspections.

We can do this. We need to do it. And the American taxpayer deserves it, not to mention our troops in the field who certainly don’t want to find themselves targeted by our own, superior weapons and equipment.

Some progress has been made but I am eager to hear more specifics about how we can ensure that hundreds of millions of dollars in weapons and equipment are indeed accounted for and confirmed as properly delivered where intended.

I thank you for your oversight work, and I look forward to your testimony today. With that I yield back.

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