

Statement of  
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Before the Subcommittee for Oversight and Investigations  
of the Armed Services Committee  
United States House of Representatives

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Wittman, Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for this opportunity to join with colleagues from the Department of Defense and the Department of State to discuss the implementation of the Synchronized Pre-deployment Operational Tracker (SPOT).

At the outset, I want to express appreciation for this Subcommittee's continuing interest and vigilance in overseeing the implementation of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 and subsequent legislation. The collaboration among Defense, State and USAID in arriving at an agreed way forward to collect and report information on contractor and grantee personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan has benefited substantially from your oversight.

USAID is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under the law to report on the number of contractor and grantee personnel in a common database. I have learned of the difficulties the Agency encountered when it entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Defense and State in 2008. That MOU identified SPOT, an existing system, as the common database for these agencies. While a substantial number of USAID contractor personnel were registered in SPOT in 2009, USAID struggled with the effort to apply this system more broadly to its programs in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A particular concern has been the application of SPOT to the many thousands of individuals, most of them locally engaged nationals, who work with USAID contractors and grantees in local activities such as agriculture, community governance, and humanitarian relief. USAID has 130 employees in Iraq who manage and oversee the work of more than 1,460 implementing personnel working under 12 active grants and contracts at the prime- and sub-award levels. In Afghanistan, 260 USAID employees manage and oversee more than 105 active grants and contracts with more than 21,000 implementing personnel on the ground.

Very few of the personnel working under USAID grants and contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan have interaction with the Department of Defense that would require the issuance of a Letter of Authorization or other form of individual identification. USAID has provided required personal information about those personnel who do require a Letter of Authorization in Iraq and has entered organizational level information in SPOT about the concerned grants and contracts in both Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, it has engaged in discussions with Defense and State colleagues and with our implementing partners about how to accommodate the various concerns in a manner consistent with the law and its intent.

I am pleased to report that last month representatives of our three agencies met to examine the best way forward. We arrived at a solution that will assure timely and accurate reporting through SPOT of the numbers of USAID contractor and grantee personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, this reporting will avoid the costs and administrative burden of entering unneeded detailed personal information about tens of thousands of people involved in USAID activities in communities throughout Iraq and Afghanistan. This solution conforms to the requirements of the law and meets the needs of the concerned agencies. It also meets concerns of our implementing partners, which we share, that registration of their personnel under SPOT could be misunderstood in the communities where these individuals work. This could increase risks to their personal safety.

As a result of this interagency agreement, which was encouraged by this Subcommittee, three good things have happened:

- First, we expect that the Administrator of USAID will sign today a new MOU with State and Defense to provide a current, clear and authoritative basis for our participation in SPOT. Under the MOU:
  1. USAID will assure that all required personal information will be provided with respect to personnel of USAID implementing partners

(both contractors and grantees) who require Letters of Authorization due to logistical support, military interface, or other reason.

2. USAID will assure that timely and complete information will be provided indicating aggregate numbers of other personnel of USAID implementing partners (both contractors and grantees) in Iraq and Afghanistan and aggregate numbers of such personnel who are killed or wounded.

- Second, technical staffs from Defense and USAID are meeting to assure that the operation of the data entry procedures will facilitate the capture of the required information.
- Third, the concerned management offices of the three agencies have agreed to meet periodically with a view to coordinating on matters of contract administration and identifying and acting on issues of common concern that may arise.

I feel confident that these developments will contribute significantly to better reporting and better interagency coordination without any substantial additional costs or loss of efficiency. There can be no doubt that the Subcommittee's oversight has been an important factor in the progress we have made and we welcome your continued interest and support.