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STATEMENT OF

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(MIDDLE EAST)

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

ON

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM (PRT) PROGRAMS

OCTOBER 4, 2007

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Mr. Chairman (Dr. Vick Snyder, USMC 67-68) and Congressman Akin, members of the committee, thank you for your interest in our nation's security and the honor of testifying before you this morning. I appreciate your support of the men and women of our Armed Forces who around the world, often in very difficult and challenging environments, and far from home and family are making a difference.

Our goal remains an Iraqi government that transitions to self-reliance where all Iraqis unite against violence and perceive the Government of Iraq as the legitimate authority that provides security, law and order, and basic services. Provincial Reconstruction Teams are frontline civilian-military operators who serve a vital role in the campaign to stabilize Iraq with our coalition partners. They serve as the primary interface between US and coalition partners and provincial and local governments throughout Iraq.

As part of the President's January 07 "New Way Forward" strategy, The interagency, led by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of State (State), partnered in order to double the 10 "paired" PRTs--so named because of their specific alignment with

geographic provinces and whose principle focus is the provincial government. The 10 additional PRTs integral to the President's New Way Forward are embedded, or ePRTs, whose principle focus is on district and local governments. These ePRTs work hand-in-glove in Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) or their marine counterpart, Regimental Combat Team.

Although the Department of State has the lead in reconstruction efforts, at the request of Secretary Rice, DoD agreed to provide some personnel, on an interim basis, to expedite standing up the 10 "New Way Forward" ePRTs. Over the summer the teams were formed from personnel provided by DoD, State, USAID, Department of Justice, and Department of Agriculture.

These teams have already begun to make a positive impact. For example, PRTs have been instrumental in developing local capacity to prioritize funds and manage projects. As a result of PRT technical assistance, provinces have obligated over \$1 billion dollars worth of Iraqi funded reconstruction projects: a significant achievement in a country with a history of central control. Iraq now has provincial

councils sitting together debating the merits of various projects, developing a budget, and letting contracts. This effort not only helps build local capacity for budget execution, but improves the democratic process as disparate interests compete for resources and parties negotiate and bargain to resolve complex problems.

Concurrent with the standup of the 10 ePRTs over the spring and summer, manning was authorized for the formation of an additional four new ePRTs with the specific goal of providing a balance of security, economic, and governance initiatives in under-served areas of Baghdad and Southern Diyala. A fifth new ePRT is also being assembled from manpower within theater. These 5 new ePRTs are currently forming and will begin to function by the end of October bringing the total number of PRT/ePRTs to 25 (10 “paired” PRTs and 15 ePRTs). Throughout these processes, DoD has coordinated closely with the State Department and beginning in November, State will begin a phased replacement of the interim DoD personnel on the 10 “New Way Forward” ePRTs.

We attribute a large part of the success of PRTs to their versatility and skill sets tailored to the specific challenges of their local

environments. Additionally, embedded PRTs provide a unique benefit as a result of their integration with their host Combat Teams. What we have learned is that the fusion of the PRT with their Combat Teams helps coordinate objectives. As stated by Ambassador Crocker in his congressional testimony earlier this month, this embedded concept has become a force multiplier that he is considering implementing with the other paired PRTs.

The strategic situation in Iraq will ultimately be solved by political means. To that end, PRTs play an integral role in advancing the political process from the local, district and provincial level. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you this morning. I look forward to answering your questions.