



**Statement of Congressman Ted Poe (TX-02)
before the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security
of the House Committee on the Judiciary
December 19, 2007**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Members of the subcommittee. Thank you for quickly organizing and holding this important hearing.

I am here this morning to introduce a brave young woman, Jamie Leigh Jones. She will tell you about her horrific experiences in Iraq as an American civilian contractor, who was drugged and gang-raped by her American civilian coworkers.

What Jamie will tell you paints a picture of lawlessness--where criminals go unpunished and victims are vilified. For American civilian contractors, Iraq is reminiscent of the Old Western days and no one seems to be in charge. The law must intervene, round up these outlaws, and restore order.

I became involved in this case when Jamie's dad called my office in Texas because I represent Jamie and her dad in Congress. He relayed Jamie's account of her assault and being held hostage in a shipping container and asked for immediate assistance. My staff and I contacted the United States Department of State's Department of Overseas Citizens Services. Within 48 hours, the State Department dispatched two agents from the US Embassy in Baghdad, rescued Jamie, and brought her back home.

It is my understanding that an Assistant US Attorney interviewed Jamie and that a State Department Special Agent investigated her case. However, the Department of Justice has not informed Jamie or me of the status of a criminal investigation against her rapists. It is interesting to note that the Department of Justice has thousands of lawyers, but not one from the barrage of attorneys is here to tell us what, if anything, they are doing. Their absence and silence speaks volumes about the hidden crimes of Iraq.

Jamie turned to another government agency in January 2006. She filed a formal complaint with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against KBR for sexual harassment. In May 2006, the EEOC issued a Letter of Determination that was favorable to Jamie. The EEOC determined that Jamie was sexually assaulted by one or more KBR employees, that physical trauma was apparent, and that KBR's own investigation "was inadequate and did not effect an adequate remedy."

Two and a half years after her assault, Jamie does not have justice. Jamie decided to go public with her case because she wasn't getting answers from our government. It seems our government agencies have failed her.

While the criminal justice system has certainly failed Jamie, in the United States, the civil court system may be of no help either in holding wrongdoers civilly liable for the injuries they have inflicted on victims. The inclusion of a binding arbitration clause in Jamie's employment contract may preclude her from accessing a judge or jury to hear her civil case. She may be forced into arbitration, a privatized justice system with no public record, no discovery, and no meaningful appeal. Jamie needs and deserves justice. As a former judge, I have always thought that the best way to solve disputes was in a courtroom with a jury.

Since Jamie has gone public with her experience, my office has heard from 3 other women. Of course, my office will furnish the names of these women to the

Judiciary Committee if needed. One of the three women is Tracy Barker. Tracy is also a former KBR employee, who says that she was sexually assaulted in Iraq by a State Department employee who still works at the State Department today.

The 2 other women are also former KBR employees. They both report sexual assaults and sexual harassment by their coworkers in Iraq and neither woman has seen any federal law enforcement action. One of the women informed my office that she was molested several times and raped once by her KBR coworkers. When she reported the crime to her immediate supervisor, she was told that they would take care of it. She returned to work two days later and found her rapist working alongside of her. She panicked and called Army MPs, who escorted the rapist off of the base. However, she was subsequently fired. It seems that, unfortunately, Jamie's case is not unique.

Our government has a responsibility to protect American civilians overseas. These contractors work in support of an American military mission. Those who work in Iraq in support of the American military have a right to the same protections that we bestow on our citizens here in America.

We need someone in Iraq to enforce our federal laws. The individual rapists must be prosecuted. Americans cannot go abroad and commit attacks on fellow Americans without the long arm of the law holding them accountable.

The individuals who assaulted Jamie must be rounded up and tried. Nonfeasance by civilian contracting companies cannot be tolerated. Victims must get the justice that they deserve because justice is what we do in America. And that's just the way it is.