

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

“Abuses in Private Security and Reconstruction Contracting in Iraq: Ensuring Accountability, Protecting Whistleblowers”

Witness Biographies

Kathryn Helvenston-Wettengel

Mother of Former Blackwater USA Employee

Ms. Helvenston-Wettengel is the mother of Scott Helvenston, a former Blackwater employee and Special Operations soldier who was killed in Fallujah, Iraq in 2004 while escorting a convoy of three empty trucks to pick up kitchen equipment for a food service company. Ms. Helvenston-Wettengel is a resident of Leesburg, Florida.

Jeremy Scahill

Investigative Reporter

Jeremy Scahill is a Polk Award-winning investigative journalist. Mr. Scahill is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling book, “Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army.” *The New York Times* called the book “a crackling exposé of the secretive military contractor Blackwater USA.”

Mr. Scahill is a frequent contributor to *The Nation* magazine and a correspondent for the national radio and television show *Democracy Now*. He is currently a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute.

Nick Bicanic

Documentary Filmmaker

Nick Bicanic co-wrote and co-directed the award-winning “Shadow Company,” a documentary film about private security companies operating in Iraq. The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote that the film “presents a balanced view...[while criticizing] the fact that civilian safeguards on mercenary behavior are practically nonexistent, a state of affairs that can lead both to human rights abuses and to ill feeling toward the United States.”

Mr. Bicanic is the co-founder of Purpose Films, a Vancouver-based film production company. He also founded Deltabravo, Ltd, a multimedia design and strategy company in London. He is a graduate of the University of Cambridge.

Donald Vance
Former Private Security Contractor

Donald Vance is a Navy veteran and former employee of Shield Group Security Company in Iraq. After reporting that his employer was engaged in illegal gun sales in Iraq, he was detained by the military and subjected to harsh interrogation over a three month period at Camp Cropper.

The military eventually released Mr. Vance without explanation, admitting that he had done nothing wrong. He kept notes on his time in detention and smuggled them out in a Bible. In April 2007, Mr. Vance was awarded the Ron Ridenhour Truth-Telling Prize for speaking out about both the illegal activity he witnessed and his experiences while in detention.

Bunnatine Greenhouse
Former Top-Ranking Civilian Contracting Officer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Bunnatine Greenhouse is the former civilian chief of contracting at the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Ms. Greenhouse received notice that she was to be demoted and removed from the Senior Executive Service (SES) shortly after she raised concerns over the Bush Administration's actions leading to the award of no-bid contracts to Halliburton for work in Iraq. She remains employed with USACE, as a GS-15 civil servant.

Ms. Greenhouse graduated *magna cum laude* from Southern University, and has earned master's degrees from the University of Central Texas, George Washington University, and the National Defense University.

Robert Isakson
Former Coalition Provisional Authority Contractor

Robert Isakson is a founder and the current Managing Director of DRC, Inc., a project management, construction, and construction management firm in Mobile, Alabama. Previously, he was a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation for ten years, serving as a supervisor in charge of white collar crime and political corruption in Louisiana.

Mr. Isakson was also one of the founders of Al-Ayoub Marr Bell Trading and Contracting, a construction and life support service company founded in Kuwait, and directed its international operations from its inception. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas.

Stephen Kohn
Executive Director
National Whistleblower Center

Stephen Kohn is one of the nation's leading experts on whistleblower protection law and the author of the first legal treatise on whistleblowing. Since 1984, he has successfully represented whistleblowers in numerous cases and has testified before Congress on whistleblower-related issues. Mr. Kohn has filed numerous *qui tam* claims on behalf of employees who disclosed government fraud, successfully litigated landmark precedents establishing employee rights under the First Amendment, and has represented whistleblowers in the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombing cases.

Mr. Kohn, who is a partner in the Kohn, Kohn and Colapinto law firm, received a J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law, an M.A. in Political Science from Brown University, and a B.S. in Social Education from Boston University. He serves as the Executive Director of the National Whistleblower Center.

Alan Grayson
Attorney
Grayson & Kubli

Alan Grayson has been a principal at the Grayson & Kubli law firm in McLean, Virginia since he founded the firm in 1991. Prior to starting the firm, Mr. Grayson was a founder and President of IDT Corporation, a publicly traded billion-dollar telecommunications company. He also worked for five years at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, a Washington, DC law firm, where he concentrated in government contracts law.

Last year, Taxpayers Against Fraud named him Attorney of the Year for his work representing whistleblowers regarding contract fraud in Iraq. Mr. Grayson received B.A., M.A., and J.D. degrees from Harvard University.