

109TH CONGRESS }
2d Session

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

{ REPORT
109-397

REQUESTING THE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTING THE
SECRETARY OF STATE AND SECRETARY OF DE-
FENSE PROVIDE TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTA-
TIVES CERTAIN DOCUMENTS IN THEIR POSSES-
SION RELATING TO ANY ENTITY WITH WHICH
THE UNITED STATES HAS CONTRACTED FOR PUB-
LIC RELATIONS PURPOSES CONCERNING IRAQ

ADVERSE REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON
H. RES. 685
together with
DISSENTING VIEWS



MARCH 16, 2006.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be
printed

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ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

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REQUESTING THE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTING THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND SECRETARY OF DEFENSE PROVIDE TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CERTAIN DOCUMENTS IN THEIR POSSESSION RELATING TO ANY ENTITY WITH WHICH THE UNITED STATES HAS CONTRACTED FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PURPOSES CONCERNING IRAQ

MARCH 16, 2006.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. HUNTER, from the Committee on Armed Services,
submitted the following

ADVERSE REPORT

together with

DISSENTING VIEWS

[To accompany H. Res. 685]

The Committee on Armed Services, to whom was referred the resolution (H. Res. 685) requesting the President and directing the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense provide to the House of Representatives certain documents in their possession relating to any entity with which the United States has contracted for public relations purposes concerning Iraq, having considered the same, report unfavorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the resolution not be agreed to.

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

House Resolution 685, introduced on February 15, 2006, by Representative Dennis Kucinich, requests the President and directs the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State to transmit to the House of Representatives information in the possession of the President, the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of State relating to “any entity (including the Rendon Group and the Lincoln Group) with which the United States has entered into a contract for public relations purposes concerning Iraq insofar as such documents related to such contract.” The resolution requests relevant documents regarding three issues: (1) communications between United States government officials and any contractor relating to the contract; (2) any proposed or realized public relations work by any such contractor for the United States pursuant to the contract;

or (3) the business relationship arising from such contract between the United States and any such contractor, i.e. billing statements.

Clause 7 of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides for a committee to report on a qualifying resolution of inquiry, such as H. Res. 685, within 14 legislative days or a privileged motion to discharge the committee is in order. H. Res. 685 was referred to the Committee on Armed Services on February 15, 2006.

Under the rules and precedents of the House, a resolution of inquiry is one of the means by which the House may request information from the head of one of the executive departments. It is a simple resolution making a demand of the head of an executive department to furnish the House of Representatives with specific information in the possession of the executive branch. It is not used to request opinions or to require an investigation on a subject.

BACKGROUND

On November 30, 2005, the Los Angeles Times published an article which alleged that the U.S. military in Iraq paid Iraqi newspapers to publish dozens of articles written by Americans but presented to the Iraqi press as news accounts written by independent journalists. The Times story stated that the articles were written by U.S. military "information operations" personnel and were translated into Arabic and placed in Baghdad newspapers with the assistance of at least one defense contractor, identified as the Lincoln Group. According to the report, "dozens" of these types of articles were published.

On December 2, 2005, the U.S. command in Iraq acknowledged that "we have offered articles for publication to Iraqi newspapers and in some cases articles have been accepted and published as a function of buying advertising and opinion/editorial space, as is customary in Iraq." On December 8, 2005, General George W. Casey, Jr., the commander of the Multi-National Force Iraq, appointed Rear Adm. Scott R. Van Buskirk to review the allegations. On January 11, 2006, the Department of Defense announced that the Van Buskirk investigation was nearly complete. On February 17, 2006, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld stated during a television interview that the U.S. military had stopped paying Iraqi newspapers to publish pro-American articles. On February 21, 2006, Secretary Rumsfeld indicated during a press conference that he had misspoken during the television interview. He clarified his remarks to indicate that he did not have any knowledge as to whether or not the payments had stopped and reiterated that the program was under review.

In a letter dated today, March 13, 2006, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England confirmed that the Department has several ongoing reviews regarding public relations contracts in Iraq. In the letter he indicated that the Department of Defense Inspector General is reviewing activities related to the specific issues raised by H. Res. 685 and confirmed that General Casey's review of the Lincoln Group contract "is nearing completion." Secretary England indicated that the Department of Defense will fully brief the committee on these issues at the conclusion of the ongoing investigations.

In light of the ongoing investigations and the willingness of the Department to fully cooperate with the committee, the committee concluded that transmittal of the materials identified in H. Res. 685 was not necessary at this time. Therefore, the committee ordered the resolution to be reported adversely.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE,
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2006.

HON. DUNCAN HUNTER,
*Chairman, Committee on Armed Services,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Resolution 685 regarding public relations contracts in Iraq.

The Department fully agrees with your assessment that truthful and transparent interaction with the press is vital to the United States' success in the ongoing war on terrorism. The United States faces a determined enemy that attempts to manipulate the media, often with the purpose of further endangering U.S. forces. Our challenge is to aggressively provide information to the public to both inform them and to counter disinformation.

The Department has several ongoing and pending reviews. In response to requests from members of Congress, the Department of Defense Inspector General is reviewing activities related to the exact issues raised in the resolution. Those reviews are in progress, and the Department is prepared to brief appropriate committees of Congress when those reviews are complete.

Additionally, the Commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, ordered a review of the Lincoln Group Contract in late 2005 to address questions as to the propriety and efficacy of those programs. The review is nearing completion, and the Department is prepared to brief appropriate committees of Congress when it is completed.

One of the eight ongoing studies from the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review is focused on this issue and is intended to ensure that DoD organization, training, and doctrine are appropriate to the challenge. The Department must have the most modern tools and authorities to inform the public and counter the enemy's disinformation in a manner that upholds our own standards of truthfulness and transparency. Again, the Department would be pleased to offer briefings to concerned members and staff to acquaint them with the range of issues and challenges.

Sincerely,

GORDON ENGLAND,
Deputy Secretary of Defense.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

As noted above, H. Res. 685 was introduced on February 15, 2006, and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

On March 14, 2006, the Committee on Armed Services held a markup session to consider H. Res. 685. The committee reported adversely the resolution by a record vote of 31 ayes to 19 noes, a quorum being present.

COMMITTEE POSITION

On March 14, 2006, the Committee on Armed Services met in open session and reported adversely the resolution H. Res. 685 to the House by a record vote of 31 ayes to 19 noes, a quorum being present.

COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE

Pursuant to clause 3(d) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the committee estimates the costs of implementing the resolution would be minimal. The Congressional Budget Office did not provide a cost estimate for the resolution.

OVERSIGHT FINDINGS

With respect to clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the committee reports that the findings and recommendations of the committee, based on oversight activities pursuant to clause 2(b)(1) of rule X, are incorporated in the descriptive portions of this report.

With respect to clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 308(a)(1) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, this legislation does not include any new spending or credit authority, nor does it provide for any increase or decrease in tax revenues or expenditures.

With respect to clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, performance goals and objectives can not be explained, because the resolution does not require any new funding.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 3(d)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the committee finds that the rule does not apply because H. Res. 685 is not a bill or joint resolution that may be enacted into law.

RECORD VOTE

In accordance with clause 3(b) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, record and voice votes were taken with respect to the committee's consideration of H. Res. 685.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
109TH CONGRESS
ROLL CALL

Motion to Report Adversely

Date: 03/14/06

H. Res.685

Offered by: Weldon

Voice Vote Ayes Noes

Rep.	Aye	Noes	Present	Rep.	Aye	Noes	Present
Mr. Hunter	X			Mr. Skelton			
Mr. Weldon	X			Mr. Spratt		X	
Mr. Hefley	X			Mr. Ortiz		X	
Mr. Saxton	X			Mr. Evans			
Mr. McHugh	X			Mr. Taylor		X	
Mr. Everett	X			Mr. Abercrombie		X	
Mr. Bartlett	X			Mr. Meehan		X	
Mr. McKeon				Mr. Reyes	X		
Mr. Thornberry				Dr. Snyder	X		
Mr. Hostettler	X			Mr. Smith		X	
Mr. Jones	X			Ms. Sanchez		X	
Mr. Ryun (KS)	X			Mr. McIntyre		X	
Mr. Gibbons	X			Ms. Tauscher		X	
Mr. Hayes	X			Mr. Brady			
Mr. Calvert	X			Mr. Andrews		X	
Mr. Simmons				Ms. Davis (CA)	X		
Mrs. Davis (VA)	X			Mr. Langevin			
Mr. Akin	X			Mr. Israel		X	
Mr. Forbes	X			Mr. Larsen		X	
Mr. Miller (FL)	X			Mr. Cooper		X	
Mr. Wilson	X			Mr. Marshall			
Mr. LoBiondo	X			Mr. Meek		X	
Mr. Bradley				Ms. Bordallo		X	
Mr. Turner	X			Mr. Ryan (OH)		X	
Mr. Kline	X			Mr. Udall		X	
Mrs. Miller (MI)	X			Mr. Butterfield		X	
Mr. Rogers	X			Ms. McKinney			
Mr. Franks	X			Mr. Boren		X	
Mr. Shuster							
Mrs. Drake	X						
Dr. Schwarz							
Ms. McMorris	X						
Mr. Conaway	X						
Mr. Davis (KY)	X						

Roll Call Vote Total:

31 Ayes 19 Noes Present

DISSENTING VIEWS OF CONGRESSMAN NEIL
ABERCROMBIE

I was sincerely disappointed with the committee's recommendation to unfavorably report House Resolution 685 to the full House. I feel that Mr. Kucinich's resolution was a straightforward request for information from the President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense regarding contracts entered into by the United States for public relations services. I supported this resolution because ensuring the effective use of taxpayer dollars is a critical responsibility of Congress and because Congressman Kucinich originally asked for these documents in December of 2003 yet has received no reply from the Department of Defense.

It could well turn out that the activities Mr. Kucinich seeks information on are entirely appropriate, legal, and effective. I welcome a debate on that very issue. However, the mere possibility that this program is on track does not obviate Congress's oversight responsibilities regarding the Department of Defense.

Congressman Kucinich requested the information outlined in the resolution from the Secretary of Defense more than two years ago and has not received any information in return. To this member, the DOD's reluctance to provide this information constitutes either a deliberate attempt to hide the facts or a blatant disregard for Congress's oversight responsibilities. Either way, the DOD's behavior to date warrants additional investigations by this committee into these public relations programs, and I welcome the Chairman's commitment to hold hearings in the near future.

The letter from Deputy Secretary England presented by Chairman Hunter during the hearing, while good news, does not answer the specific request Mr. Kucinich makes in the resolution. Instead, it simply offers "briefings" on internal "reviews" being conducted by the DOD Inspector General and Commanders in Iraq. Clearly, a briefing on a review is not the same thing as actually getting access to the documents requested by Congressman Kucinich. Briefings have some utility, but I do not believe they are a substitute for the committee doing its own serious investigatory work.

I look forward to working with the Chairman to look into this important issue in the future.

NEIL ABERCROMBIE

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