HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

AND

SUBCOMMITEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

TESTIMONY OF HOWARD J. KRONGARD

INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS

JULY 26, 2007

Chairman Waxman, Ranking Member Davis, Subcommittee Chairman Tierney, Subcommittee Ranking Member Shays, and other members of the Full Committee and the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs.

Thank you for inviting me to discuss the Department of State Office of Inspector General's memorandum (Memorandum) on its review of the Construction Workers Camp at the New Embassy Compound (NEC), Baghdad. I have attached a copy of the Memorandum to this testimony.

I personally have made two visits to the NEC construction site. The first visit was in November 2005. That visit to the NEC was a routine part of my trip to Baghdad and was not prompted by any specific allegations of wrongdoing. I walked and rode through most of the site, including the camp which housed the construction workers, and I spoke randomly with members of the work force, which consisted of many different nationalities. Nothing came to my attention during that visit evidencing any Trafficking in Persons (TIP) violations or human rights abuses.

In the months following my visit, various allegations came to my attention regarding abuses and misconduct at the NEC, including ones having to do with food, passports, entry into Iraq, pay, physical abuse, living facilities and medical facilities. Therefore, in June 2006, I contacted the Multi-National Force – Iraq Inspector General (MNF-I IG), who had previously done inspections of conditions in camps in

Iraq, and proposed we conduct a joint review of the Construction Workers Camp at the NEC. At that time, we agreed to conduct the review together on-site in August 2006. Because MNF-I IG had experience in inspecting life support areas across Iraq and was planning to conduct a large number of such inspections, we agreed to use the work plan suggested by them. In mid-July, however, MNF-I IG was required to postpone the review indefinitely due to other higher priority matters.

I believed the allegations warranted an early review in spite of this delay, so the Deputy Inspector General and I traveled to Iraq in early September and carried out a review according to the work plan suggested by MNF-I IG for a review focused on TIP and the fair and ethical treatment of a foreign work force.

It is important to note that the review we conducted was necessarily limited in scope. It did not constitute an audit. It consisted essentially of agreed-upon or limited procedures and was designed to provide negative assurance rather than attestation.

The review included interviews with senior State Department officials and contracting authorities in both the U.S. and Baghdad; private interviews with workers of at least four nationalities; physical review of the entire NEC site, including kitchen and dining facilities, medical clinic, recreational facilities, computer café, telephone access areas, commissary, management offices and other areas; inspection of the private living quarters of each interviewee and numerous other

workers randomly selected; inspection of the various group facilities, such as shower and lavatory, barbecue, religious, recreation and sport areas; and questions asked of workers we randomly encountered during the physical inspection. A summary of the responses received from the workers interviewed and the results of the physical inspection are set forth in the Memorandum.

Because my review was limited, I continued to seek additional inspection from MNF-I IG. While that inspection was being scheduled, the Management Counselor and at least four other senior officials from the Embassy, including the Regional Medical Officer, visited the workers camp, provided observations that are included in the Memorandum, and reported that in general, the camp was adequate for its purposes and the basic needs of food, housing and sanitation were being met.

On two separate occasions in December 2006, an MNF-I IG team also inspected the camp. MNF-I IG's procedures and experience were significantly more extensive than my own. MNF-I IG found no evidence indicating the presence of severe forms of trafficking. After setting forth their inspection results, MNF-I IG concluded that, except for recruitment fees illegal in some workers' country of origin, there was no evidence of TIP violations, and of the 58 areas inspected by MNF-I IG, the NEC camp was rated in the top third with above average quality of life conditions. A copy of MNF-I IG's report to me was appended to the Memorandum.

Based on all of the foregoing – including my November 2005 visit, my September 2006 review, Management's visit in November 2006, and MNF-I IG's two inspections in December 2006 – nothing came to our attention that caused us to believe that TIP violations or violations of the type I mentioned at the outset and in the Memorandum occurred at the Construction Workers Camp at the NEC.

At the appropriate time, I will be pleased to answer your questions. Thank you.