

**Washington, D.C.** - Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Congressman David Price (D-N.C.) Tuesday introduced companion bills in the House and Senate to ensure accountability under U.S. law for American contractors and employees working abroad. The Civilian Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (CEJA) will close a gap in current law to make certain that American government employees and contractors are not immune from prosecution for crimes committed overseas.

The legislation follows efforts in previous Congresses by Leahy, Price and others, including then-Senator Barack Obama, to provide for prosecution of violations of U.S. law by Americans working overseas for the U.S. government. Recent examples, including the violent rape of Jamie Leigh Jones, a contractor with Halliburton, while stationed in Iraq, and the killing of unarmed civilians in Baghdad by private security contractors with Blackwater, have further highlighted the need for this legislation. Jones testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in October.

Price said, "The overseas contractor loophole has compromised the rule of law and imperiled our nation's moral authority. We simply must close it. By establishing clear legal jurisdiction and better investigative capacity, this legislation will ensure that contractors who break the law will be held accountable."

Leahy said, "To restore accountability, having a responsible administration will unfortunately not be enough. Congress must change the law to make sure that our criminal laws reach serious misconduct by American government employees and contractors abroad. The Civilian Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act will accomplish this important and common sense goal. No one should be above the law, certainly not American employees and contractors representing this great nation throughout the world. This bill would promote the rule of law throughout the world and make us stronger in the process."

The legislation is cosponsored in the Senate by Senator Ted Kaufman (D-Del.).

Kaufman said, "As we have seen in recent years, the failure to address serious criminal conduct by American contractors working abroad has undermined our counterinsurgency efforts and strained our diplomatic ties. This bill, by providing federal law enforcement the tools necessary to arrest and prosecute the wrongdoers, will establish needed accountability and further

emphasize the United States' commitment to justice and the rule of law."

The proposed legislation creates no new substantive offenses, but rather allows the government to prosecute government contractors and employees for certain serious crimes. The legislation expands on the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (MEJA), which provides similar criminal jurisdiction over Department of Defense employees and contractors but does not clearly apply to U.S. contractors working overseas for other federal agencies, such as the Department of State.

Leahy is the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to which the legislation will be referred in the Senate. Kaufman is also a member of the panel. Price is the Chairman of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee.

The Civilian Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act will:

- Direct the Justice Department to create new investigative units to investigate, arrest and prosecute contractors and employees who commit serious crimes.
- Allow the Attorney General to authorize federal agents to arrest alleged offenders outside of the United States, if there is probable cause that an employee or contractor has committed a crime.
- Require the Attorney General to report annually to Congress the number of offenses received, investigated and prosecuted under the statute; the number, location, and deployments of the newly created investigative units; and any changes needed in the law to make it more effective.

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