

Washington, D.C. - In response to a major report issued by the General Accounting Office (GAO) today, US Rep. David Price (NC-04) has reiterated his call for an overhaul in the way the federal government oversees contractors in Iraq and elsewhere.

Price, who requested the GAO report, also introduced a bill late Thursday that would require federal the government to give better guidance to contactors and to collect information on cost, personnel, and casualties. These requirements address concerns raised by the contractors themselves, and they were highlighted in the GAO's report.

"The conclusions reached by the GAO about the contracting process are deeply troubling," Price said upon being briefed by GAO investigators. "They have confirmed our concerns: there is confusion about the tasks assigned to contractors, a lack of oversight to ensure their safety, question as to their chain of command, and inadequate information on their cost and effectiveness. I hope this report spurs Congress and the Bush Administration to finally deal with this issue."

Last night, Price re-introduced the TASC Act (Transparency and Accountability in Security Contracting), which was revised to address the problems highlighted by the GAO report. TASC would set standards for contracting and require that the government collect basic information from its contractors. This information would include the estimated cost of the job, the number of people employed by the contract, and the level of training required.

In May 2004, Price wrote a letter to GAO, signed by more than 100 Members of Congress, asking for an investigation into the use of civilian contractors in Iraq and elsewhere. GAO agreed to issue this report answering Price's questions, including whether contractors are carrying out security duties beyond the scope of their authority, and whether the federal government is providing contractors the information they need to do their jobs safely and effectively.

The first installments of the report, issued by GAO this morning, find confusion dealing with contracts and a lack of information available to conduct a substantive cost analysis. This summer, GAO will issue further installments addressing the jobs of private security contractors and their chain of command.

In the last Congress, Price had introduced a companion bill to the TASC Act, along with Congressman Chris Shays (R-CT). This second bill closed glaring legal loopholes in the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (MEJA). It was incorporated into the Department of Defense authorization bill and signed into law late last year.