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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3405

July 18, 2008

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

I urge you to take emergency action to ensure that electrical systems at U.S. military facilities in Iraq are brought up to standards that do not endanger the lives of our troops.

The Senate Democratic Policy Committee (DPC) held a hearing on July 11, 2008 that produced extensive evidence of shoddy electrical work by contractor Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR). Electrocutions in Iraq as a result of improper electrical systems have caused the death of over a dozen American soldiers and employees of contractors in Iraq.

We heard testimony at the hearing from two former KBR electricians who described how KBR hired unqualified electricians, provided inadequate equipment, and ignored warnings of serious flaws in electrical work. We also heard from the mothers of two U.S. soldiers killed due to improper electrical systems.

I find it incomprehensible that KBR continues to be trusted to perform electrical systems maintenance at U.S. military facilities in Iraq, and has even been tasked with conducting a review of all such electrical systems to judge the safety of their own work. In my judgment, the Pentagon needs to take two steps at once: (1) an immediate review of electrical systems in Iraq by independent and qualified electricians, and (2) the replacement of KBR by a qualified electrical contractor to perform electrical systems maintenance at U.S. military facilities in Iraq.

I emphasize that this issue deserves and requires your personal attention. While I am aware that the Department of Defense Inspector General has launched an investigation of the electrocutions in Iraq, I do not believe that the Pentagon should wait months or years for the Inspector General to complete an investigation before taking action to ensure the safety of our troops.

Sincerely,



Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senator

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