

## **STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DANIEL K. AKAKA**

### *The Diplomat's Shield: Diplomatic Security and its Implications for U.S. Diplomacy*

#### **Hearing**

#### **Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

Aloha and thank you for being here today. This Subcommittee held a hearing in 2009 to examine staffing and management challenges at the State Department's Diplomatic Security Bureau (DS), which protects State Department employees and property worldwide. Today's hearing will build on the previous hearing, as well as examine the results of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) review of Diplomatic Security training challenges.

Since the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the Bureau's mission has expanded dramatically to meet the State Department's evolving security needs. As our military is expected to withdraw its remaining 50,000 troops from Iraq by the year's end, Diplomatic Security will face an unprecedented challenge. The Bureau will be responsible for many security and protective functions now performed by the military, such as clearing improvised explosive devices and defending U.S. posts against rocket and mortar attacks.

In addition, the Bureau is expected to implement a State Department recommendation to provide high-threat awareness training to all employees in both high-and critical-threat posts. This would require the Bureau to train 10,000 employees per year, five times the number for 2010. The Bureau's responsibilities will continue to expand with the planned troop reductions in Afghanistan.

As we deploy more civilian Federal employees to support democratic reform and self-governance in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other high-threat areas, it is critical that Diplomatic Security have the training, resources, and support needed to protect them. The Government Accountability Office report released today makes clear that DS is doing a remarkable job preparing its people to provide robust security in an unpredictable environment, but I do want to highlight a major concern that GAO raises.

GAO's report finds that Diplomatic Security training facilities are inadequate. The Bureau is using 16 different leased, rented, or borrowed facilities. In some of these sites, the Bureau's training needs are not a priority, which increases costs and leads to training delays. Also, some facilities are too small or in need of repair. Although the Bureau is in the process of selecting a site to build a consolidated training facility, this will take years to complete.

Another significant concern that I have, which I asked the Bureau to address today, is how it oversees its large contractor workforce. As DS provides security in more high-threat areas, the Bureau grows increasingly reliant on contract staff. Contractors make up about 90 percent of its total workforce. This

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requires the Bureau to train its workforce in contract oversight in addition to physical and personal security.

The 2007 Blackwater shooting that killed 17 Iraqi civilians while protecting a State convoy reminds us that DS contractors, particularly those acting as bodyguards, must be held to the highest standards for training and accountability because the stakes are tremendously high.

I also look forward to hearing about what steps the Bureau has taken to address key issues raised at the Subcommittee's 2009 hearing. I am particularly interested in the Bureau's progress in addressing its language proficiency shortfalls and staffing gaps; balancing the need to provide strong security with carrying out the diplomatic mission; and improving its strategic planning, which is important for targeting limited resources in this budget climate.

I know that Ambassador Boswell and his team are working hard to address these challenges. I look forward to hearing about the Bureau's efforts, as well as discussing ways we can work together to move forward. I thank our witnesses for being here today to discuss these critical issues.

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