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Opening Statement

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

**Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental
Relations, and Procurement Reform**
**Hearing on “Are Government Contractors Exploiting Workers Overseas?
Examining Enforcement of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act”**

November 2, 2011

Chairman Lankford and Ranking Member Connolly, I want to thank you for convening today’s hearing on U.S. government contractors and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

U.S. contractors have been implicated in allegations of human trafficking violations at various locations overseas, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Our nation has sought to respond to these allegations by enforcing a “zero tolerance” policy that prohibits government employees and contractors from engaging in forced labor and other abuses.

But our nation’s policy has failed, and this failure is an appalling embarrassment that should be of concern to every Member of Congress.

During the 110th Congress, under the leadership of then-Chairman Henry Waxman, our Committee heard testimony in 2007 about abuses carried out by contractors working to construct our own U.S. embassy in Baghdad.

More recently, the Final Report of the Commission on Wartime Contracting concluded that existing prohibitions on human trafficking are not working. The Commission made several recommendations to help protect workers and hold government contractors more accountable.

Chairman Lankford and Ranking Member Connolly, by holding today’s hearing you are demonstrating your commitment to ending these abuses. I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses and to working to identify ways we can hold contractors responsible for ensuring that foreign workers are protected. Thank you.

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