TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,
CHAIRMAN

CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
DAN BURTON, INDIANA
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, FLORIDA
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
GIL GUTKNECHT, MINNESOTA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, OHIO
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE
CANDICE MILLER, MICHIGAN
MICHAEL R. TURNER, OHIO
DARRELL ISSA, CALIFORNIA
VIRGINIA BROWN-WAITE, FLORIDA
JON C. PORTER, NEVADA
KENNY MARCHANT, TEXAS
LYNN A. WESTMORELAND, GEORGIA
PATRICK T. McHENRY, NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLES W. DENT, PENNSYLVANIA
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515–6143

MAJORITY (202) 225–5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225–3974
MINORITY (202) 225–5051
TTY (202) 225–6852

http://reform.house.gov

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
MAJOR R. OWENS, NEW YORK
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND
LINDA T. SANCHEZ, CALIFORNIA
C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER, MARYLAND
BRIAN HIGGINS, NEW YORK
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

November 30, 2005

The Honorable Tom Davis
Chairman
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing regarding a report in today's *Los Angeles Times* that the military is secretly paying Iraqi newspapers to run stories that present a positive image of the military and the U.S. mission in Iraq.[1] According to the *Times*, the "U.S. has paid Iraqi newspapers to run dozens of such articles … since the effort began this year." The operation has been run entirely in secret and is "designed to mask any connection with the U.S. military."

In addition, the *Times* learned from a military official that the Pentagon has "purchased an Iraqi newspaper and taken control of a radio station, and was using them to channel pro-American messages to the Iraqi public. Neither is identified as a military mouthpiece."

If these reports are true, they have significant implications that should be investigated by the Committee. As one senior Pentagon official told the *Times*: "Here we are trying to create the principles of democracy in Iraq. Every speech we give in that country is about democracy. And we're breaking all the first principles of democracy when we're doing it."

As you know, I requested in February that the Committee investigate growing reports of the use of "covert propaganda" by the federal government.[2] After some back and forth, we agreed to send a joint document request to several federal agencies seeking information about their contracts with public relations firms. At your request, however, we did not include the Department of Defense in the document request.

---

[1] *U.S. Military Covertly Pays to Run Stories in Iraqi Press*, Los Angeles Times (Nov. 30, 2005).

[2] Letter from Rep. Henry A. Waxman to Chairman Tom Davis (Feb. 8, 2005).

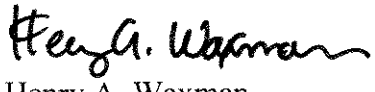
The new disclosures in the *Los Angeles Times* should cause us to revisit the decision to exempt the Department of Defense. According to the *Times*, the news articles are written by military "information operations" troops. These stories are then translated into Arabic and placed into Iraqi newspapers under a contract with the Lincoln Group. Lincoln Group staff and subcontractors do not identify the articles as originating with the military when they place the articles, sometimes posing as "freelance reporters or advertising executives when they deliver the stories to Baghdad media outlets." The *Times* found that the stories produced under this program "read more like press releases than news stories," and "often contain anonymous quotes from U.S. military officials." One senior military official told the *Times* that, "[a]bsolute truth was not an essential element of these stories."

Military efforts to influence Iraqi news coverage covertly should not be tolerated. I hope that you will join me in requesting information from the Pentagon regarding this and any other military efforts to influence Iraqi coverage of the U.S. mission. To begin an investigation, we should request:

- All documents related to the creation and role of the "Information Operations Task Force" in Baghdad;
- All contracts — including the statement of work, task orders, and any modifications — issued by the Pentagon for public relations and media outreach in Iraq, including, but not limited to, the contract with the Lincoln Group to place articles in Iraqi newspapers;
- All deliverables produced under these contracts, including, but not limited to, any materials produced by the Lincoln Group and its subcontractors;
- Copies of all articles placed by the U.S. military or the Lincoln Group in the Iraqi media;
- Any documents related to the U.S. military purchase or control of any Iraqi media outlets, including television stations, radio stations, and newspapers.

I look forward to working with you on this effort.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member