

Deploying Federal Civilians to the Battlefield

- The Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the HASC started a study of Department of Defense (DOD) civilians deploying for Provincial Reconstruction Teams in August of 2007, and then expanded its look to include all federal civilians deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Approximately 10,000 federal civilian volunteers have deployed. Both the Department of State (Civilian Response and Reserve Corps) and DOD are planning for even more civilian volunteers to deploy in the future.
 - DOD currently has approximately 3,000 civilians in Iraq or Afghanistan.
- The subcommittee examined the adequacy and equitability of benefits and medical care packages and policies provided for civilian volunteers.
- Major findings on **medical care**:
 - DOD has specific policies and directives, but they may not be sufficient (e.g., no requirement for medical case coordinator) or properly implemented.
 - Non-DOD civilians can be treated at Military Treatment Facilities in theater, under “compelling circumstances.” This needs clarification.
 - Civilians may not receive adequate pre-deployment medical screening or post-deployment surveillance or treatment, especially for mental health.
 - It is not clear whether civilians have access to military medical advances for combat wounds and injuries.
 - The Federal Employees’ Compensation Act (“Workers’ Comp”) process is based on “job injuries,” which is not compatible with combat zone injuries.
- Major findings on **benefits and incentives**:
 - According to an American Foreign Service Association 2008 survey of Foreign Service Officers (FSO):
 - #1 reason for volunteering for duty in Iraq is pay and benefits.
 - #2 reason for volunteering for duty in Iraq is patriotism.
 - There are both real and perceived differences between federal employees from different agencies and with different job classifications.
 - The State Department, the model for most other departments and agencies, just collected all its information in order to respond to the subcommittee’s request for a Congressional Research Service (CRS) study. CRS is continuing to collect data.
 - Authorities granted by Congress providing Foreign Service benefits to deployed civilians of all federal agencies will expire in 2008, including the premium pay cap waiver.
 - A congressionally-mandated DOD report on civilian benefits was due to the Armed Services Committee on March 30, 2008. It has not been received.
 - The Government Accountability Office is assessing all departments’ and agencies’ implementation of benefits and medical care packages.