

**Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing**  
**“Rewarding Failure:**  
**Contractor Bonuses for Faulty Work in Iraq”**

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**Former KBR Master Electrician**

I would like to thank the distinguished members of this Committee for giving me the opportunity to present my concerns to you today. I am a licensed Master Electrician in nine states. I am a working partner in an electrical contracting company based in Guthrie, Oklahoma that performs electrical work throughout the United States.

In 2008, I submitted my application to KBR as a Licensed Master Electrician. I was very aware of the electrocution deaths of our soldiers and the other serious electrical hazards. I believed I could use my skills and experience to support our troops and civilians by providing them with a safer living and working environment.

When KBR contacted me I was very excited to go to Iraq and start supporting our troops. Unfortunately, my excitement and experience with KBR was short-lived. I went to Iraq in February 2009 and returned home in April 2009. After experiencing only two months of the KBR management culture and witnessing poor quality work at three separate bases, the Al Asad Airbase, Camp Striker and Camp Warrior, I decided that I could no longer be affiliated with KBR.

Based on my personal observations at these three bases, at least fifty percent of the buildings KBR worked on were not properly wired. By the time I left, I concluded that KBR was not capable of performing quality, legal electrical installations in Iraq. I worried every day that people would be seriously injured or killed by this defective work. I would be happy to return to Iraq to help our troops, but only under different circumstances with a different contractor.

When I arrived in Baghdad, I was initially satisfied with the week-long training program KBR sponsored for incoming electricians. The test given by KBR at the end of the training should have been used to determine who needed more training, but trainees were allowed to use their notes from the class to take the test so no one failed. KBR could have spent more time performing assessments to make sure everyone understood the principles of the class before sending them out into the field.

I would estimate approximately 50 percent of KBR electricians in Iraq do not understand the basic principles of bonding and grounding. These individuals would not have been hired in the United States to perform such work. Unfortunately, those KBR electricians who are most qualified are not in positions of authority to properly manage KBR electrical installations.

The Superintendent for the electrical department at Camp Warrior, for example, is a foreign-national who has no understanding of either the National Electric Code (NEC) or the British Standards. The second in charge was also a foreign national with no formal electrical training. These managers are supposed to provide direction and set the priorities for KBR's electrical work, but in my professional opinion they are unqualified to do so.

Third Country Nationals perform the majority of KBR's electrical work in Iraq. Most have absolutely no knowledge of the National Electric Code or British Standards and the quality of their work reflects that. Much of this work is not thoroughly inspected by licensed electricians. I personally have refused to sign-off on work they have performed because I knew it was not up to code.

This brings me to another huge issue with KBR. Any refusal to sign off on electrical paperwork is frowned upon by the KBR management. At Al Asad Airbase, I was asked to sign off on paperwork that was incomplete. The person who had performed the initial work had not completed all of the steps necessary to ensure safe operation and installation. The electrician did not review the loop impedance by testing the entire circuit to ensure there was no fault in the grounding or reverse polarity. My KBR manager assured me that the work would be completed at a later date. But I did not believe them and I did not sign it.

If an electrician did actually go back to finish the work at a later date, the company would have been able to charge the DoD again for work that should have already been done during the initial testing and inspection. Plus the DoD would be getting reports showing completed inspections, so DoD would believe the buildings are safe. Talking with electricians from other sites, this has become a common practice for KBR.

Those who are hired by KBR for the electrical department are not being placed in appropriate positions, suitable to their skill level. To cite one example, a television repairman was operating an electrical truck, but I can assure you that just because a TV repairman works with wires does not mean that he can perform electrical work. There are many different classifications of journeyman electricians. A licensed journeyman telephone installer is not the equivalent of a journeyman electrician.

Another reason KBR's work is failing to meet the NEC is because the company uses material in locations it is not listed for. There are many examples I could give, but one common problem relates to cables and electrical conductors. The insulation of the

cables is unable to withstand the high temperatures in Iraq. The cable is often brittle and cracks, which exposes the wires and creates a serious hazard. Some cables that are being installed are listed for interior residential use only. KBR is using this cable outside, where it cannot withstand the hot, desert sun and UV rays. The NEC specifically requires all devices, equipment and wire only to be used for its listed application.

There is also a significant problem with some of the breakers that KBR purchases. These breakers are counterfeit and do not provide over-current protection. Instead, they contain only switches. This is not immediately apparent unless an inspection is performed. A circuit breaker should make the breaker trip when an overload occurs, but without the circuit breaker, the wires are not protected and create a serious fire hazard. Such a hazard has the potential to injure people and result in significant property damage.

I finally decided I had had enough of KBR while I was working on a project and we found a grenade. The camp manager and the chief of services were alerted, but they denied my request for a full sweep of the building to ensure the safety of everyone working there. I took this issue to the HR and security departments, but the camp manager has the ultimate authority and he did not care about the safety of KBR personnel. I believe the camp manager did not do the security sweep because he was concerned KBR would not have reached the numbers they promised the customer.

After that experience I knew I could no longer work for a company so completely focused on the bottom line they would disregard the safety of their employees and those we were serving: our soldiers.

I believe that the Army's Task Force SAFE is making a positive impact on the safety of our soldiers and civilians through their inspections of KBR's electrical

installations. The team is doing the best it can, but there is no way they can review all of KBR's work without more inspectors and more support.

KBR has become very skilled at convincing the DoD that their work is efficient, effective and safe. During my time working for KBR the work I witnessed was anything but efficient, effective and safe. KBR does not assign qualified people to positions of authority and it is using substandard materials.

I believe the most dangerous element in theater is the lack of qualified leadership at KBR. Most KBR managers are arrogant and again, in my professional opinion, completely unqualified for the positions they hold. They are far too busy looking back, covering their tracks. The company should be looking forward to make the changes needed to provide the quality product the government expects and deserves.

Before I close, I would like to clarify one thing before KBR has the chance to label me as a "disgruntled former employee." I am not a "disgruntled former employee." I am a disappointed and disgusted former employee.

Thank you for this opportunity. I will be more than happy to answer your questions.