

Statement of Congressman Alcee L. Hastings
Chairman
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
Briefing: “The Forgotten: Iraqi Allies failed by the U.S.”
June 11, 2008

I would like to welcome all of you to this Commission briefing about the plight of Iraqi refugees who have worked for the United States in Iraq -- and whose lives have been placed in danger for that service -- and the work of an incredible organization, *The List: Project to Resettle Iraqi Allies*, that was created to help them.

While it is heartening to learn about this effort and the many Iraqis *The List Project* has assisted, it is at the same time distressing that such an undertaking is even necessary. It is because of the failure of our government to do what it has a moral obligation to do -- help those who have helped us. In May, the U.S. opened its first processing office in the Green Zone in Baghdad for Iraqi allies -- something that I had recommended a year ago to Administration officials.

The founder and driving force behind *The List Project* is Mr. Kirk Johnson who worked in Baghdad and Fallujah in 2005 as the coordinator of reconstruction for USAID. During his time in Iraq, Mr. Johnson tried to help one of his friends who had been identified as working for Americans and had gotten death threats. The U.S. government did not do anything to help the Iraqi, so Mr. Johnson stepped in and tried to find a way to save his friend. In the process, more and more Iraqis found out about Mr. Johnson's efforts and sought his assistance, and *The List Project* was born -- officially on June 20, 2007, World Refugee Day.

Since March 2003, the United States has admitted fewer than 8,000 Iraqi refugees. Sweden, by comparison has accepted 40,000 Iraqi refugees in the same time period. The Administration has set a goal of admitting 12,000 Iraqi refugees by the end of this fiscal year. However, it is questionable as to whether they will be able to meet that goal. Ambassador Foley recently stated, “On paper, we feel pretty good that we can reach our goal.” He further noted that any number of hitches could prohibit resettlement to the United States.

To put this in historical perspective, after the fall of Saigon in the spring of 1975, more than 110,000 Vietnamese allies of the United States were airlifted to Guam where they were processed for resettlement to the U.S. in a matter of months.

Three individuals are with us today to describe their experiences and their work, Mr. Kirk Johnson, the founder of *The List Project*, Mr. Christopher Nugent of the law firm of Holland & Knight who is providing *pro bono* legal services for those Iraqis on *The List*, and an Iraqi whom Mr. Johnson and Mr. Nugent helped to resettle in the United States. Our third panelist will remain anonymous in order to protect members of his family who remain in Iraq. Thank you.