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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

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January 30, 2008

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

We are writing to express our grave concerns about the readiness posture of the United States Armed Forces and, in particular, the readiness of the U.S. Army. As you may remember, we have on numerous occasions expressed our distress about growing readiness shortfalls and our desire to take every action necessary to restore our military to its full capability. Our review of the most recent Department of Defense quarterly reports detailing the services' readiness posture indicates that the past readiness shortfalls have not improved but are continuing to decline. This situation presents the United States with an alarming strategic risk to our national security that we believe must be addressed.

We have learned that the Army is continuing to report shortages of equipment and personnel which, along with the high operations tempo, make it difficult for units to remain prepared for their full spectrum of combat missions. The Congress has provided funds and statutory authority to address this problem. Provisions in the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) mandating the creation of the Defense Materiel Readiness Board were intended to address equipment readiness issues to ensure that nothing slows the flow of needed resources to the warfighter on the ground. We feel that this board and the statutory authorities included in the NDAA are important tools that can be used to address declining readiness.

Over the past 30 years the United States has entered into 12 military conflicts, most of which we did not foresee. We must not allow strategic weakness to exist or we risk emboldening those who would seek to do us harm. We simply are taking unacceptable risks in our ability to protect our nation and our interests. We ask that you address this readiness situation and the Administration's plan to mitigate the strategic risk during your testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on February 6.

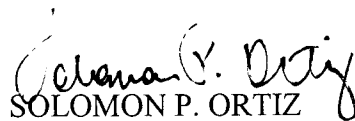
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We are very interested in the actions you are taking, your plan for using new authorities, and any additional steps that the Congress can take to help restore our military's readiness. We believe that these readiness issues present a grave risk to our nation that must be addressed now, before the next conflict emerges.

Sincerely,



IKE SKELTON
Chairman



SOLOMON P. ORTIZ
Chairman, Readiness Subcommittee

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