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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0702

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The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000.

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

I am writing to you in light of today's media reports on plans to maintain current force-levels in Iraq for another four years. I remain concerned that maintaining approximately 140,000 troops in Iraq presents significant challenges to the U.S. military's ability to perform its most critical security missions.

As Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker has repeatedly stated, exhausted stocks of vehicles and gear, as well as manpower shortages are leaving our forces strained beyond precedent and ill-prepared for combat duty. I am sure that you will agree that our soldiers' bravery and valor can never be exhausted. But the same cannot be said for the fleets of humvees, trucks, and aircraft they depend on. For this reason, I offered an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2007 Defense Appropriations bill to ensure that a \$17 billion shortfall in critical funding for repairing and replacing this weaponry was addressed. As you know, my amendment was approved unanimously by the Senate and incorporated into the final version of the Defense spending bill. But much more remains to be done.

As the United States responds to nuclear posturing along the Korean Peninsula, it is particularly important today that efforts are made to relieve the strain being placed on our Armed Forces. The United States must always be in a position to exercise all of its foreign policy options, including the military option.

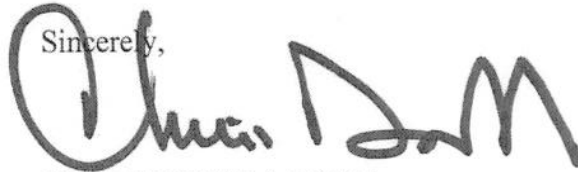
Once again, it is being reported that the Army Chief of Staff is requesting that the proposed Department of Defense budget address critical shortfalls in the budget to replace or repair our fleets of vehicles and equipment wiped out and lost due to combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, senior Army officials have been cited as expressing concern that the Army's current end-strength is inadequate to meet the ongoing manpower requirements of the wars.

Nonetheless, Congress' efforts to expand the size of the Army have been obstructed, forcing individual soldiers to repeatedly rotate into areas of operation for over a year. Such policies have seemingly strained unit morale, mental health, and military family relations. Now, according to media accounts, America's citizen-soldiers in the National Guard and Reserves are being told that they may have to increase the number of overseas deployments, even beyond the current rate of once every three to four years.

As policy-makers, we should have no higher priorities than the preparedness of our military to protect our nation. Meeting these needs necessarily requires that we look after the safety and wellbeing of America's troops deployed in harm's way. As you develop the fiscal year 2008 Defense budget, I strongly urge you to develop a plan that will meet a \$25 billion requirement for vehicle and equipment needs reportedly identified by Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker. Furthermore, I strongly urge you to take steps to relieve the personnel strains caused by current defense policies and expand the active Army force to 560,000 troops, as advised by former Army Chief of Staff and current president of the Association of the United States Army, General Gordon Sullivan.

I look forward to reviewing a prompt response to this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Dodd", written in a cursive style.

CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
United States Senator