

House Armed Services Committee

Ike Skelton, Chairman

<http://armedservices.house.gov>

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House-Senate Committee Agreement Reached On Fiscal Year 2009 Defense Authorization Bill

Washington, DC – House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-MO) announced that the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have reached agreement on the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.

The agreement, which is expected to be considered this week in the House and the Senate, authorizes \$531.4 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense (DoD) and the national security programs of the Department of Energy (DoE). The bill also authorizes \$68.6 billion to support ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan during fiscal year 2009.

Chairman Skelton released the following statement:

“This agreement reflects our bipartisan commitment to our service members and their families and to a strong national defense. This defense bill promotes our main policy objectives: restoring military readiness; taking care of the troops and their families; increasing focus on the war in Afghanistan; and improving interagency cooperation, oversight, and accountability.

“Continuing our effort to restore military readiness tested by the demands of two wars, the agreement provides \$8.6 billion for the Army and \$1.8 billion for the Marine Corps to repair and replace equipment. The agreement also provides \$800 million for National Guard and Reserve equipment. To help manage demands placed on our service members by our military obligations, the agreement increases the size of the military by 7,000 soldiers, 5,000 Marines, 1,023 sailors, and by 450 airmen.

“To improve the quality of life for our forces and their families, the agreement provides a 3.9 percent pay raise for the troops, which is .5 percent more than the President’s budget request. The agreement also preserves important health benefits, by prohibiting fee increases in TRICARE and the TRICARE pharmacy program and creating new preventive health care initiatives to improve the readiness of our force, keep service members and their families healthy, and to reduce the overall need for care.

“The war in Afghanistan is a critical mission that demands greater attention. To better coordinate military operations and achieve a unity of command whenever possible, the agreement requires a report on the command and control structure for military forces operating in Afghanistan. The agreement also requires reporting on enhancing security and stability in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

“For greater transparency and accountability, the agreement places restrictions on the use of training and reconstruction funds in Iraq and requires the Defense Department to report to Congress on the details of any Status of Forces Agreements that exist or are signed between the U.S. and Iraq. The agreement also bans permanent U.S. bases in Iraq and bans U.S. control over Iraqi oil.

“To jumpstart the interagency reform effort, the agreement establishes a 12-member advisory panel, modeled after the Defense Policy Board, to improve coordination among the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on matters relating to national security. Controlled by and reporting directly to the Secretaries, the advisory panel is a tool to help agency leaders do a better job dealing with interagency objectives.

“Since the Senate approved its version of the defense authorization bill last week, House and Senate Armed Services Committee members and staff have been working to reach agreement so a bill can be considered by both houses and sent to the President before Congress adjourns. This is an excellent bill and I urge my colleagues in the House and Senate to support the agreement.”

A detailed summary of the agreement on the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 is available on the House Armed Services Committee web site at <http://armedservices.house.gov/>.

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