

# PRESS RELEASE



## House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 25, 2004

**CONTACT**

Harald Stavenas  
Angela Sowa  
(202) 225-2539

### **OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER**

*Department of the Army Fiscal Year 2005 Posture Hearing*

This morning the committee will continue its review of the Fiscal Year 2005 defense budget request, with a look at the Department of the Army.

This year's defense budget requests \$98.5 billion for the Department of the Army, \$5.2 billion more than the fiscal year 2004 peacetime budget.

Unlike similar hearings in the past, today we don't have to theorize about how the Army is doing or will do in the field of battle. Today's Army has been and continues to be on the front lines in the war on terror.

As we speak, Army forces are hunting down terrorists in Afghanistan and Iraq, rebuilding these nations from the devastating effects of decades of tyrannical rule, while at the same undertaking fundamental reforms in order to better defend our interests well into this century.

While our troops are deployed around the world, it's our responsibility back home to give them all of our support and every tool they need to accomplish the mission. Since the attacks of September, I believe it's fair to say that we have all worked towards that end no matter our politics or districts. This year must be no different.

We can start by, at minimum, fully funding the President's budget request for the next fiscal year. That does not necessarily mean accepting it as is or without scrutiny. But we should agree that no matter what debate follows as part of our normal process, we must make sure that our troops in the field fighting receive all the resources they need to carry out their mission as effectively and safely as possible. Funding the President's requested defense budget topline is an essential start point toward that goal.

Doing that may be difficult this year. There are some who apparently believe that the threats to U.S. national security are sufficiently contained to allow us to begin cutting defense spending again. That

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would be a mistake. Al Qaeda is still out there. Ansar al-Islam is still out there. Rogue states are still out there; and as the daily news headlines confirm, some of them continue to pursue weapons of mass destruction.

It has been said that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Now is not the time to let down our guard by shortchanging our troops on the battlefield.

In that same vein and beyond the budget debate, it is equally important that Washington – both Congress and the Pentagon – take every step and exhaust every option in providing our troops in the field with all available technology and equipment options to carry out their mission. As both of our witnesses know from various discussions we've had, I am deeply concerned that our military acquisition system is too hidebound and obsessed with archaic process that only gets in the way of rapidly fielding simple equipment solutions that can make the difference between soldiers coming back home alive or in one piece.

You can be assured that this committee will be making these force protection issues a critical priority for as long as we have our troops deployed in harms way. I certainly hope we can continue this productive dialogue in this area and continue to work together to find ways to push these critical capabilities into the field and into the hands of soldiers as rapidly as humanly possible. I assure you that this committee and my colleagues stand ready to do anything we can to assist you in this regard.

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