

# PRESS RELEASE



## House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

*Hearing on the investigation into the abuse of prisoners  
within the Central Command area of responsibility.*

We're here for one simple reason: last year, several members of the United States military disgraced the uniform. By abusing enemy detainees, a handful of miscreants broke our laws, embarrassed their country, and created an international incident.

Unlike Saddam, who practiced such abuse--and worse--as a matter of state policy, the United States does not tolerate that kind of behavior. The military will bring the guilty to justice, just as surely as Saddam could not escape accountability for his crimes.

I know that, because I know this Secretary and the leadership team he and the President have created for the Department of Defense. We are engaged in a complex and global war on terror and are operating against terrorists in two major theaters. We need to judge the Department's leadership on its performance in that war, not on its public relations skills or the frequency with which a few egos on Capitol Hill get bruised. And in that area, the Secretary and his colleagues have consistently demonstrated excellent management skills and superior military judgment.

Today, some people with 20/20 hindsight ask why the Secretary didn't drop everything to personally investigate the abuses when they were first reported in January. That's bad and irresponsible advice. It's immensely more important that the Secretary of Defense focus on defeating our enemies, particularly when investigators in Iraq were already conducting a massive, comprehensive, and swift investigation that has already resulted in 6 people being charged with criminal offenses. Simply put, the wheels of military justice are already moving, and we all know they turn much faster than our civilian courts.

Even as we condemn the brutal acts of a few, we must remember that their behavior is isolated. The vast majority of American soldiers are serving their country honorably, professionally, and, in many cases, heroically.

Take for example Gunnery Sergeant Jeffrey Bohr, Jr., United States Marine Corps. While serving in Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, in the 1st Marine Division, Sergeant Bohr volunteered to join an armored resupply convoy with his two soft-skinned vehicles. According to the Navy,

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“while moving through narrow streets toward the objective, the convoy took intense small arms and rocket propelled grenade fire. Throughout this movement, Gunnery Sergeant Bohr delivered accurate, effective fires on the enemy while encouraging his Marines and supplying critical information to his company commander....Upon learning of a wounded Marine in a forward vehicle, Gunnery Sergeant Bohr immediately coordinated medical treatment and evacuation. Moving to the position of the injured Marine, Gunnery Sergeant Bohr continued to lay down a high volume of suppressive fire, while simultaneously guiding the medical evacuation vehicle, until he was mortally wounded by enemy fire.” The President awarded Gunnery Sergeant Bohr the Silver Star posthumously.

Over 300,000 have served in the theater since the war started last year. Altogether, they have earned more than 3,767 Purple Hearts, at least 4 Distinguished Service Crosses, 127 Silver Stars, and 16,000 Bronze Stars.

But there’s more to our soldiers than just courage in battle; today’s military is also the most humane force in the history of the world. It’s in Iraq to defeat tyranny, not to occupy another country. And it’s rebuilding that country while fighting terrorists. Already in Iraq, the coalition has completed over 20,000 reconstruction projects, restored electricity production higher than pre-war levels, rebuilt an oil industry that will help Iraqis build a better future, and increased public health spending by a factor of 30.

Some people want to ignore those facts and focus solely on the immoral and illegal acts of a few. That’s exactly what our enemies want: to portray the United States as the Great Satan and to tar all of our soldiers with the reprehensible actions of a very few. Some people tried to do that in Vietnam; we must not let it happen today. To focus solely on the abuses, while downplaying the incredible accomplishments, would be to commit an injustice against our people, who are serving honorably with the distinction and professionalism we have come to expect from them.

We are all outraged by what happened. I’m sure that nobody in this room is angrier than our witnesses. Gentlemen, we look forward to hearing how the Department of Defense is ensuring that the guilty parties are identified and brought to justice. I have every confidence in your commitment to that outcome and your continued leadership of our war effort. The American people could not ask for a better team.

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