PRESS RELEASE

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Opening Statement of Chairman Hunter
Hearing on Army Transformation – Part Two

This is the Committee's second hearing on Army Transformation. We began the series last week with a panel of distinguished outside witnesses. Today, we will hear from the Army's senior uniformed leadership.

At the beginning of the Second World War, the U.S. 7th Cavalry Regiment—Custer's old unit—was armed with the 1903 Springfield rifle, the 1911 Colt .45 pistol, and the 1918 Browning Automatic rifle. By the end of the war, we'd replaced the Springfields with M1 Garands and the troopers were more familiar with Sherman tanks than with horses. The Army probably transformed itself more rapidly between 1941 and 1945 than at any time in its history.

I believe it is self-evident that the Army must do so again. We must move from an Army designed to resist the Soviets, to a force tailored to win the kinds of wars we have in Iraq and Afghanistan, against enemies who ignore the international laws of warfare and amidst civilians who have a wide range of attitudes towards the United States.

The question, of course, is what should that transformed Army look like? Some have seized on advanced intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, command, and control capabilities as the ingredients of network-centric warfare. Others have focused on the need to deploy quickly across strategic distances and recommended a reconfiguration of our divisions into modular brigades. And, still others have focused on the increased benefits of jointness to argue that the Army can shed certain capabilities in order to free-up resources for non-traditional missions.

To its credit, the Army has developed a transformation plan to exploit every advantage in doctrine, organization, and technology to build a new Army for the 21st century.   That said, I think we need to be cautious. Transformation is a good idea for the new capabilities it brings to the military. But, it's equally important to pay attention to what we could lose in the process. First, in the rush to embrace high technology and replace armor and firepower with speed and information, we may well lose the ability to engage in a traditional stand-up fight against either heavy or unconventional forces.

I'm not the historian on the committee, but the ranking member from Missouri may recall the debates over battlecruisers in the Royal Navy at the turn of the last century. Advocates argued that their speed and maneuverability would make up for their lack of armor and firepower, but the Navy found out the hard way that its battlecruisers simply could not stand up in the slugfests that followed. Speed wasn't a substitute for armor when the enemy's salvos finally found their mark.

Second, we need to pay close attention to how the rush to embrace new technology affects our thinking about warfare. The intelligence problem we have in Iraq today is not solely the result of a lack of networked sensors. As General Robert Scales pointed out last week, good intelligence on our enemy requires a solid understanding of what makes him tick, much of which you can't learn through technology. Because war is a human activity—and not an engineering problem—there is no silver bullet guaranteed to make all our wars winnable and all our casualties low. We need to equip our troops with the best equipment we can, but, ultimately, their best defense lies in their ability to out-smart the enemy.

I know our witnesses are on guard against falling into that trap. But it's a trap the entire national security community needs to keep in mind while we debate the pros and cons of transformation. I look forward to hearing our witnesses as we move forward in this process.

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