



PRESS RELEASE

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Opening Statement of Chairman Hunter
Hearing on the Progress in the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Iraq

Our guests this morning are:

Colonel Michael Linnington, USA
Former Brigade Commander
101st Airborne Division

Lt. Colonel Bryan P. McCoy, USMC
Former Commander
3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment

Lt. Colonel Jeffrey Springman, USA
Former Commander
3rd Battalion in support of the 4th Infantry Division

Captain Patrick Costello, USA
Former Air Defense Artillery Commander
101st Airborne Division

Captain Morgan Savage, USMC
Former Company Commander
3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment

Today's hearing is a bit of a departure from the conventional Armed Services Committee hearing. Today we will hear from those military officers directly in charge of commanding our men and women in uniform who are performing with bravery, honor and effectiveness in multiple theaters around the world in the fight against global terrorism.

While we normally hear from the generals several steps removed, today we will hear from those with the most direct experience in how the American soldier and Marine is carrying out this important mission for their country.

- This hearing is about the selfless work of the American military in Iraq.
- It's about how we acknowledge the efforts of our troops, who are deployed halfway around the world.

- It's about how future generations will remember this generation of Americans, called to serve their country in the global war on terrorism.

Now some may think this is merely another attempt to justify the war in Iraq. I happen to personally believe that the American people are safer with Saddam Hussein out of power and in jail. And I think that our efforts to bring democracy to the Middle East will discredit, demoralize, and undermine our terrorist enemies. Others may and I'm sure actually do disagree.

However, I trust that we can all agree that the vast majority of Americans serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are answering their country's call to service with bravery, dedication, integrity, and honor.

Tomorrow we will have two full committee hearings on the abuse of detainees in the global war on terrorism. What happened in those instances was inexcusable, but it is hardly representative of the vast majority of our military personnel in Iraq. The misdeeds of some soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison and elsewhere must not be allowed to define worldwide perceptions of our Armed Forces.

Thirty years ago, a generation of Americans fought in another foreign war. Because the war was controversial, some people who opposed it sought to tar all Vietnam veterans with the crimes of a small handful. We can't allow that to happen again.

That's why we're here; to hear from individuals who have returned from the battlefield about all that they've accomplished, and why the American soldier, Marine, sailor, and airman, still represents the best that this country has to offer.

Gentlemen, thank you again for appearing before the committee. We understand that you don't set national policy and our purpose here today is not to pull you into those debates.

But,

- you know your soldiers and Marines;
- you know the challenges they've overcome;
- you know the courage they've demonstrated in combat;
- you know the seriousness with which they take their mission; and,
- you know the hard work they've done to help an abused people secure a democratic future.

The American people need to know it, too.

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<http://armedservices.house.gov/>