

House Armed Services Afghanistan Hearing – December 3, 2009

REPRESENTATIVE RANDY FORBES (R-VA):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And as Congressman Taylor said, I'm going to ask some tough questions. But I do appreciate you being here. There was a time in our country when words mattered, when laws and statutes mattered.

Mr. Secretary, Title 10, Section 231 of the U.S. Code required that you submit to us, to this committee, a shipbuilding plan when you sent your budget over, so that we would know where the money was going to be spent on our ships, and that you certify that the budget you sent over complied with that shipbuilding plan. You just refused to do it this year.

Title 10, Section 231(a) required that we have an aviation plan sent over to us and that you certify or have an assessment that the budget comply with it. And you just refused to do it.

House Resolution 477 was unanimously approved by this committee, on both sides of the aisle, requiring that you would submit to us that shipbuilding plan that the law required by September 15th. Just refused to do it. H.Res. 478 required an aviation resolution in that assessment that you would just comply with the law and submit it to us by September 15th. Just refused to do it.

Title 50, Chapter 15, Subchapter 1, Paragraph 404(a) required that we have a national security strategy submitted to us, by the president, within 150 days after he took office. We didn't get it.

The Guantanamo Executive Order issued on January 22nd, 2009, said that Guantanamo Bay would be shut down no later than one year from the date of this order, which would have been January 22nd, 2010. We know that's not going to happen. I disagreed with that order, but that's what it said.

So my question, Mr. Secretary, to you today is this: If we're not going to comply with Title 10, Section 231 -- Title 10, Section 231(a); H.Res 477; H.Res 478; Title 50, Chapter 15, Subchapter 1, paragraph 4 (and 4 (a)); the Guantanamo executive order, what confidence do our allies and our troops and our citizens have that the words we are hearing now are words that have meaning and are not just semantics?

And as you think about that question, Admiral, I would ask you this question: You testified earlier today that General McChrystal got all he wanted, everything he wanted when he asked for 30,000 troops. And the questions I'd ask -- I've never known a General to get all he wanted. I -- I've known them to get all they formally requested, but not all they wanted. And I would just ask you, are you saying to this committee that all General McChrystal ever wanted was 30,000 troops to wage the war that he is having to wage now. So Mr. Secretary, I give you that time, and then Admiral Mullen.

SEC. GATES:

First of all, with respect to the 30-year aviation plan and shipbuilding plan, it was important for us to be able to get a five-year defense plan from the administration so that we had some predictability. And we are in the process of doing that. The five-year defense plan has been put forward. It was not for FY '10.

I can provide you that kind -- I can provide you a list. It will be meaningless, because we don't know; we don't know what the resources will be until we get the five-year defense plan.

REP. FORBES:

But Mr. Secretary -- and again, I don't mean to interrupt you -- but that's not what the law says. And the law required that you submit whatever plan you're working on. If we have no plan, we need to know it when we're voting on budgets that we don't have a plan, we're waiting for it.

But the reason that the law requires it is because it's important that we know that, one, we have a plan, and what this budget is trying to reach in that plan. So with all due respect, I would've appreciated and I think this committee would've appreciated at least some response back as to why we weren't complying with the law on doing that. And I yield.

SEC. GATES:

Okay.

ADM. MULLEN:

What I thought I said earlier about General McChrystal, what I meant to say was that the strategy that the President has executed and made this -- the decision on with respect to the 30,000 troops is, General McChrystal is going to get what he asked for in 2010.

He's going to get them -- those troops in some cases more quickly than he had originally asked for them. And to me that is significant, because that will give him the thrust to turn the momentum around, turn this insurgency around, which is his number-one concern. Outside --

REP. FORBES:

And Admiral --

ADM. MULLEN:

Outside that, longer-term, there --

REP. FORBES:

And I appreciate that my -- only got eight seconds, and I'll just say this. It is a difference to us when we say he got all he wanted than all he officially requested.

REP. SKELTON:

(Gavels.)

ADM. MULLEN:

I would -- I would agree that there are very few if any commanders that have ever gotten everything that they wanted, myself included.