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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## CHAIRMAN STEVE BUYER

### Opening Remarks

### Military Personnel Titles

### Full Committee Mark-up

### Fiscal Year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act

The military personnel titles in front of you contain many initiatives to attack the serious recruiting and retention shortfalls that are eating away at the readiness of the military services.

These initiatives result from a bi-partisan effort. Neil Abercrombie and I have worked closely to ensure that the subcommittee recommendations directly address the complex problems that are driving down recruiting and retention.

As you know, for a number of years, this committee has led the way to head off what we considered to be urgent problems in manning the force. The Department of Defense, heretofore, has not completely shared this sense of urgency to solve recruiting, retention, pay and compensation problems.

However, in mid-1998, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Chiefs suddenly seemed to conclude that the Armed Forces were fighting, and losing, a two-front war to recruit and retain sufficient people; and, as a result, they began to seek approval for the additional resources to turn the battle around.

As an indicator of both the severity of need and the success of their efforts, the President's fiscal year 2000 budget contained pay and retirement reforms, as well as new bonus and special pays authority, and increased funding for recruiting.

I commend the Secretary and the Joint Chiefs for their forceful, public resolve to advocate for these reforms and initiatives. I'm convinced that without the unanimous support of these initiatives by the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary, they would not have been included in the budget request, nor politically supported by Congress.

(More)

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Now, as you all know, the Secretary and the Chiefs advocated so well that some felt compelled to enact the department's proposals immediately. Neil Abercrombie and I chose not to be overwhelmed by the initial enthusiasm. Instead, using the pay and retirement reforms of the budget request as a starting point, we undertook a deliberate, in-depth assessment of the causes of the services' retention and recruiting problems, not only as a means to assess the adequacy of the Department's budget proposals, and also to develop comprehensive solutions.

As a result of that in-depth assessment, the bulk of the subcommittee's recommendations are directed at reversing losses in the recruiting and retention wars. As in past years, we have exercised our judgment to go beyond what has been proposed in the budget request because we concluded that the request does not fully address the full range of problems.

We cannot emphasize the severity of the DOD recruiting and retention problems. They will not be solved by a one year's effort. Rather, several years of effort, at least, will be needed to restore manpower readiness to the armed services. Therefore, on behalf of the subcommittee, I strongly urge DOD's senior military and civilian leadership to continue to advocate for the additional resources to sustain and win the two-front war of retention and recruiting. To that end, I urge the full committee to pledge its long-term support.

In the nearer term, I urge my colleagues' support for the subcommittee's recommendations.

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