

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 27, 2002

CONTACT

Ryan Vaart
Meghan Wedd
(202) 225-2539

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB STUMP HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE POSTURE HEARING ON U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

Today, the committee meets to receive testimony regarding ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and the overall posture of U.S. forces within Central Command.

I am pleased to welcome General Tommy Franks, Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Central Command and Peter Rodman, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

I also want to take a minute to recognize a special guest this morning, Mrs. Cathy Franks, who is making sure we take good care of her husband. Mrs. Franks, welcome to the committee, we are pleased to have you here.

General Franks, a mere eleven months ago, you sat in that same chair and we had a good discussion about the threats to U.S. interests in your part of the world. At that time, no one could have predicted that we would be engaged in full-scale combat in your area of responsibility less than a year later, much less in Afghanistan.

Four months into Operation Enduring Freedom, our armed forces have performed this task with distinction and honor. We have routed the Taliban and Al Qaida terrorists from power in Afghanistan and are in pursuit across the globe.

However, despite a 75,000-strong coalition military force contributing to our war on terrorism in Central Asia, the region is no more secure than a year ago. Indeed, many of the threats remain and some have grown.

Saddam Hussein is still solidly in power, and increasingly defiant of the international community. Iraq continues to develop weapons of mass destruction and no one questions Saddam Hussein's willingness to use such weapons. All United Nations efforts over the years to re-establish weapons inspections in Iraq have failed and American pilots continue to fly in harm's way as they patrol the Iraqi no-fly zones.

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Iran continues to subvert U.S. efforts in the region and to undermine the peace process in the Middle East. Iran actively supports international terrorism and has acquired advanced weapons and nuclear technology from Russia.

Moreover, the threat of instability in the region has increased over the past year. Tensions between India and Pakistan have risen and their shared border is concentrated with massive military buildups on both sides.

It is therefore obvious that the United States faces difficult and pressing challenges within the Central Command area of responsibility. We welcome the opportunity to receive an update on how we are meeting these challenges including our ongoing operations in Afghanistan.

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