

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER *Full Committee Posture Hearing On Fiscal Year 2004 Army Budget*

Today, the committee will consider the fiscal year 2004 budget request of the Department of the Army.

I am pleased to welcome back Secretary Tom White and General Eric Shinseki, Army Chief of Staff, to discuss the various elements of the proposed program for the Army.

Before proceeding further, I want to take a moment to recognize General Shinseki's long and distinguished service to his nation and to the men and women of the United States Army. I know that we will continue to work closely with you over the coming months, but since this will mark your last budget posture presentation before this committee, it is only appropriate that we recognize your service and thank you for all that you have done to further the goals and future of the Army.

I find it somewhat ironic to read the daily stream of press reports that characterize the President's defense budget request as a huge and historic increase in spending. I raise this because perhaps no other element of the overall defense budget better characterizes the dilemma facing the military services than the Army budget.

This budget request does continue to make careful investments in key areas to enhance pay and benefits, quality of life for our troops and training and sustainability of our forces. It also makes significant enhancement in important research and development programs. But as in years past, these enhancements come at a steep price in terms of the trade offs.

The overall Army request for Fiscal Year 2004 is \$93.9 billion, an increase of \$3 billion above the current year. However, these numbers reflect a cut of \$2.3 billion in the Army's procurement program which was already on life supports from a decade of neglect. Part of this cut results in the cancellation of 24 Army programs in order to harvest \$1.6 billion in FY04 and around \$14 billion over the FYDP for other priorities.

I am eager to hear your case as to why we can afford to abruptly shelve these programs which form the backbone of our current heavy ground combat capability. I understand the budgetary argument, what I

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need to hear is the military argument that supports the notion that we can afford to walk away from modernizing our heavy forces at this juncture without accepting significant risk in terms of loss of combat power.

There are numerous other aspects of the proposed Army program that deserve mention, but I think it best to allow them to be explored more fully during today's hearing and the dozens of subcommittee hearings that will follow examining this budget request in greater detail.

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