

# PRESS RELEASE

## House Armed Services Committee

### Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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#### **OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER** *Hearing on Operation Iraqi Freedom: Outside Perspectives*

Even as major combat operations drew to a close last May, the battle over the lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom was beginning. A few weeks ago, this committee heard from the commanding general of Joint Forces Command, Admiral Giambastiani, whose embedded combat observers and analysts are refining the joint operational lessons learned from OIF. The Joint Staff continues its work to distill the strategic lessons learned, while the services are cataloguing their tactical lessons from this conflict.

Today, we will hear outside perspectives on Operation Iraqi Freedom and implications for future warfare and U.S. national security policy. As with any war waged by the United States, it is critical that we engage in an open and vigorous critique of our actions so that future military leaders can draw the correct lessons and apply them to the next conflict. One need only look at the erroneous lessons learned by the French military following World War I to see the value of a rigorous lessons-learned effort.

The aftermath of OIF raises some serious questions on the future of warfare. Chief among these is whether the major combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom is the last war of some former era in warfare, or the first war of a new era. Some observers believe that speed, precision and superior knowledge were the reasons for success in Iraq and herald a new type of warfare. If we invest in more high-tech systems that provide perfect knowledge of the battlefield, and combine them with increasingly capable precision weapons, we can ensure victory in any future conflict. To this, I would remind my friends that chess players always have perfect knowledge of the board, and their pieces always strike with perfect precision – but this does not always ensure a successful game.

Others have suggested just the opposite – that the major conflict phase of OIF holds few lessons for future conflicts. They argue that future wars will look more like the current phase of Iraqi Freedom, with its various religious and ethnic factions and rivalries, foreign terrorists, shadowy non-state actors, guerilla bombings, and hidden weapons of mass destruction. Emerging non-traditional threats, not conventional land forces, will be the real threat. In this environment, more human intelligence, rapidly deployable and flexible forces and superior training hold the key to victory.

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The issues we will discuss here today are much more than a sterile academic class on the nature of future conflict. The lessons we draw from this and other recent military operations will inform this committee's decisions regarding how our forces will be sized and shaped in the years to come. They will also inform us as to the nature, quantity and type of hardware and munitions we need to buy for our men and women in uniform so that they can meet the challenges of the future battlefield.

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