

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER

Hearing on Sustaining Global Commitments: Implications for U.S. Forces

The United States currently has over 100,000 troops in Iraq engaged in reconstruction and stability operations against a terrorist enemy. US forces are also fighting the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and are deployed in Central Asia and the Horn of Africa to support the Global War on Terror. We're conducting peacekeeping operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Sinai and have additional troops deployed in Europe, Japan, and South Korea to honor security guarantees we made during the Cold War. Arguably, today's military is deployed on a scale we haven't seen since the Second World War.

Unfortunately, we're engaged in all of these activities with a military that is smaller than that of 1990. The Army has fallen from 18 to 10 active divisions. The Air Force has dropped from 24 active and 11 reserve fighter wings to 13 active and 9 reserve wings. The Navy has shrunk from roughly 546 ships to under 300.

That creates problems. Active duty units must deploy more frequently than desired, leaving less time for training and increasing wear and tear on their people and equipment. Reserve units are called up more frequently, disrupting more lives than our reserve system was intended to. Arguably, our ability to deal with contingencies may be at risk, because our strategic reserve will shrink. Finally, according to some, retention rates will suffer, raising the specter of a return to the hollow Army of the late 1970s.

We are not powerless in the face of these challenges. The Administration is working on more flexible deployment cycles and basing arrangements, while beginning to reconsider the active/reserve force mix. We're examining ways of reducing the demands on our forces by encouraging allies to step up to the task of providing for their own security. Finally, the Administration has begun the process of reassessing the best means of meeting our security requirements.

These are all appropriate and helpful steps. But, they may not be adequate—and some of them may not work. Since September 11, we have been a nation at war. Yet, we are fighting that war with a military largely sized for a post-Cold War peace. It's a tribute to the quality of the people serving in uniform that

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we're defeating our enemies. But, ultimately, winning the war on terror will require a military sized to the task. We owe it to the men and women going in harm's way to make sure that there are enough of them to do the job. Ultimately, that may mean expanding force structure. This committee has already weighed in supporting that option and the Administration will hear more from us on that score in the coming months.

But, we still need a better handle on the problem. This hearing marks the third time the Armed Services Committee has reviewed these issues. The full committee held a hearing with Dr. Wolfowitz and General Pace back in June, while the Readiness Subcommittee looked at resetting the force in October. We're paying close attention because this is a vital subject; we cannot afford to get the answers wrong.

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