

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 28, 2004

CONTACT

Harald Stavenas
Angela Sowa
(202) 225-2539

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN JIM SAXTON

Hearing on Operation Iraqi Freedom Force Rotation Plan

This morning the committee kicks off the New Year with an opportunity to learn about the most significant large-scale rotation of American military forces since World War II.

Chairman Hunter asked me to fill in for him today as he was unable to make the necessary travel connections last night. He sends his regrets and also wishes to thank our distinguished panel of witnesses for agreeing to appear today on this important topic.

As Washington prepares to consider the President's budget defense proposal for the coming fiscal year, it is critically important that the Congress gain a better understanding of one of the most critical national security issue we face – the global war on terrorism and how the U.S. military will accommodate its growing requirements.

How the Department of Defense and each of the military services, as force providers, choose to meet this challenge will in many respects shape the U.S. military for years to come. Decisions on active/reserve mix, mobilization and rotation rates, force protection, personnel tempo and other key issues are already and will continue to have a lasting impact on our all-volunteer force. On the other hand, this situation also provides an unprecedented opportunity to examine long-standing personnel and organization policy since most of the underlying assumptions used to build today's force decades ago are about to be put to a severe test.

Before turning to our witnesses, let me first briefly cover two administrative items.

First, both General Schoomaker and General Hagee have a hard commitment that they must make at the Pentagon at 1:00 PM. Thus, all members should be advised that we only have a fixed period of time in which to cover this important topic and thus I urge their patience and cooperation in keeping questions and remarks brief.

Second, it is entirely likely that elements of today's discussion can only be discussed in a classified session, so we may need to shift into executive session at some point to fully explore the issue. If this step becomes necessary, we will briefly adjourn and move the hearing to Room 2212 upstairs which has been set up for this purpose.

###