

PRESS RELEASE



House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER

Full Committee Markup of H.R. 4200

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005

This markup comes at a particularly crucial time for our nation's armed forces. In the last two weeks, we've been stunned by the abuses a handful of miscreants inflicted on prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison last fall. And, just yesterday, we were shocked by the filmed beheading of an American contractor by Iraqi terrorists. While they differed in magnitude, both events should remind us that brutality is a very real, and constant, element in war.

What matters is how we deal with that fact of life. In the United States, we reject it and we punish it. In the uncivilized parts of the world, some people celebrate it. They embrace it. They export it.

We learned on September 11th, 2001 that we will not be safe if we tolerate it. That's what we're fighting for in Iraq today: to determine whether brutality or civilization will prevail in the very land where civilization began.

In the near term, the outcome of that struggle depends on the courage of our personnel on the front lines in the war on terror. In the long run, victory depends on how we face up to that challenge as a nation. Under the Constitution, Congress has an obligation to rise to the challenge. As a committee, we have an opportunity to do it right. This year's defense authorization bill is part of how we discharge our obligations, and seize our opportunities.

First and foremost, we fully funded the President's top-line request for the Department of Defense. As many on both sides of the aisle will recall, that wasn't easy. Earlier this spring we worked long and hard to ensure that the budget resolution, which binds our markup today, did not cut defense spending in the middle of a war.

Second, this bill authorizes \$25 billion in additional supplemental funding to ensure that our troops get all the resources they need to prevail on the battlefield. It also provides resources with the specificity that Congress has not previously applied to supplemental funds. This approach improves congressional oversight and ensures that our view of what is a priority will once again guide the Department's actions. Further, it is clear that the Department will need more than \$25 billion of war costs to get through the

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next fiscal year - likely considerably more. But there is a valid point to the Administration's position that given the multiple variables involved, neither they nor us can accurately predict exactly what will be needed to get through the entire year.

Thus, this mark proposes a supplemental "bridge fund" that provides the Department enough money to get through the first several months of the next fiscal year while ensuring no interruption in the flow of funds for critical force protection enhancements, additional end strength and other combat capability improvements.

On this point, the committee's efforts have been guided by the belief that we must make this the "Year of the Troops" in honor of our brave men and women in uniform deployed around the world. The mark before us reflects this approach by adjusting spending priorities wherever possible away from areas of lesser priority to those programs and activities that directly enhance the combat and force protection capabilities of our soldiers.

We have done this by prioritizing critical investments in force protection. In particular, we:

- added \$30 million for improvised explosive device jammers;
- plussed up unmanned aerial vehicle surveillance capabilities by \$192 million;
- increased funding to produce up-armored "HUMVEES" by \$704.7 million in order to sustain the needed production rate;
- increased funding for Vehicle Add-On Armor Kits for the Army's truck fleet by \$332.4 million; and,
- added \$40 million to the Bradley fighting vehicle program to sustain modernization and maintain the vehicle's readiness.

Further, this bill proposes new provisions to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Title 14 of the bill will tighten controls on advanced technology with military applications so that it does not fall into the hands of terrorist organizations or states of proliferation concern. It calls on the President to begin working on a more aggressive multilateral export control regime, and it contains measures that will assist countries around the world in tightening their export control practices. The House International Relations Committee has primary jurisdiction in these matters, but we've worked closely with Chairman Hyde over the last few months to develop a package that will make a real difference.

This mark also keeps faith with our men and women in uniform. This year's bill would authorize a 3.5 percent across-the-board pay raise. It increases hardship duty pay from \$300 to \$750 per month. It extends the increased rate for imminent danger pay from \$150 to \$225 per month and more than doubles the rate for the family separation allowance, from \$100 to \$250 per month. And, there's \$9.9 billion in the bill for military construction and housing.

Finally, the mark proposes the first significant increase in military end strength in decades by increasing the active duty Army by 30,000 and 9,000 for the Marine Corps. The committee has carefully listened to the concerns expressed by the Secretary of Defense and Army Chief of Staff and proposes an approach that fully addresses the stated concerns over forcing additional end strength on the services without the additional resources to pay for it.

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