



HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

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Hunter Expresses Strong Support for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

Washington, D.C. --- U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, today expressed his strong and continuing support for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Hunter's statement follows:

“Secretary Rumsfeld today executes the duties of his office during one of the most challenging eras in our history. While leading America’s war efforts in two theaters, he is fundamentally reforming America’s post-Cold War military, carrying on a global effort against terrorism and moving to meet the technological challenges of the future.

“The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan constitute difficult challenges for America’s Armed Forces, but that doesn’t mean that our leadership should be changed simply because the task before us constitutes difficult and dangerous work. Instead, let’s look at what has been accomplished by the United States military under Secretary Rumsfeld’s leadership.

“American forces, spearheaded by the Army’s 3rd Infantry Division and called ‘insufficient’ by some critics, rolled across the border in Southern Iraq on March 20, 2003, and were halfway to Baghdad two days later. After a series of lightning-quick movements and rapid ‘thunder roll’ advances, forces from the Army’s 5th Corps took Baghdad International Airport on April 7th and the city fell – symbolized so powerfully by the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue within Baghdad – two days later.

“Thus, Secretary Rumsfeld’s ‘insufficient’ force effectively defeated one of the world’s largest armies in the course of eighteen days. Indeed, some of the talk shows in which the Secretary’s forces were being criticized as ‘too small for the job’ were interrupted by news flashes announcing General Tommy Franks’ forces had taken yet another of Saddam’s strongholds.

“This history is reviewed not to attribute omniscience to Secretary Rumsfeld or ineptitude to his critics, but simply to point out that his judgment on the forces required to take Baghdad turned out to be sound.

“With respect to the occupation, two arguments have been used by Secretary Rumsfeld’s critics. One is that American forces are too small to win the war. The second is that we should have kept Saddam’s army intact. I disagree with Secretary Rumsfeld’s critics.

“Clearly the lightning strike to Baghdad in eighteen days validated Secretary Rumsfeld’s invasion strategy. With respect to the occupation, it is clear that asymmetric operations of the insurgents that focus mainly on roadside bombs and suicide bombers are not tactics which can be overwhelmed by simply increasing troop levels. In fact, placing more American troops on Iraqi streets and increasing the number of convoys arguably increase American exposure to bomber attacks.

“The second argument that Secretary Rumsfeld should have kept the Iraqi army intact is a similarly illogical position. Saddam Hussein maintained 15,000 generals. Proponents of this argument would have great difficulties describing how an Iraqi army populated at the top with 15,000 generals – primarily Sunni – would somehow serve and gain the confidence of a broad-based government.

“With respect to the criticism that Secretary Rumsfeld doesn’t take advice, he had 110 meetings that involved the Service Chiefs and 163 meetings that involved Combatant Commanders in 2005. These 273 meetings with his military leaders certainly illustrate that Secretary Rumsfeld respects and relies on the judgment of the Pentagon’s uniformed leadership. In 2006, 74 such meetings have taken place already.

“While leading the American military in the global war on terrorism on two major fronts, Secretary Rumsfeld also is working to transform America’s Armed Forces into a 21st Century fighting force, reposition our forces globally and build additional capacity to respond to natural disasters. He continues to have my strong support as the Secretary of Defense.”

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