



## HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

### ***PRESS RELEASE***

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### *Full Committee Hearing Highlights Reset Funding as Priority for Army and Marine Corps*

*Schoomaker: "Investment in reset at this time is critical."*

**Washington, D.C.** – The House Armed Services Committee received testimony earlier today on the Army and Marine Corps' plans to fund "equipment reset" – repairing or replacing worn, damaged or destroyed equipment – for military equipment coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan. The equipment reset discussed before the committee includes the maintenance, recapitalization and replacement of a majority of the mission-capable equipment belonging to the two services. Members have raised concerns that reset costs, which have been funded through Emergency Supplemental appropriations, may not receive adequate funding in the future due to budgetary restraints.

According to Chairman Hunter's opening statement, "Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have placed severe demands on ground and aviation equipment supporting our Army and Marine Corps forces. Therefore, resetting the force is an essential element in maintaining our ability to conduct this war, as well as preparing for any future threats."

Army Chief of Staff General Peter J. Schoomaker testified about the Army's ongoing reset strategy and plan for funding those reset requirements. "Historically, as I have testified on many occasions, the Army has been under resourced – and it is a fact that the decade preceding the attacks of September 11, 2001 was no exception. Army investment accounts were underfunded by approximately \$100 billion ... and there were about \$56 billion in equipment shortages at the opening of the ground campaign in Iraq in the spring of 2003.... At the height of the Second World War, defense expenditures exceeded 38 percent of our Gross Domestic Product. Today, they amount to 3.8 percent and are projected to shrink. We are going the direction of our NATO allies. In this extraordinarily dangerous time for the nation, we can – and must – reverse this trend."

Marine Corps Commandant General Michael W. Hagee echoed General Schoomaker's concerns. In testimony provided to the committee, General Hagee asserted, "The exigencies of continuing combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed rigorous demands on both our Marines and their equipment." He also added, "Like all wars, this war is costly, both in human terms and in the need for reliable, modern equipment.... Readiness has been the enduring hallmark of the Marine Corps, and even if this long war ended today, we would require significant fiscal support to 'reset the force.'"

Both generals cited statistics on the wear and tear of military equipment. The extreme temperatures, high altitudes, and desert environment, for example, have had a discernable impact on aviation, and additional requirements for depot maintenance for airframes, weapons, and support equipment. General Schoomaker cited examples of crews driving tanks in excess of 4,000 miles per year – five times more than the programmed annual usage rates. Not only is the life of the equipment curtailed, but greater funding in depot maintenance is necessary to deal with the growing backlog, he stated. Future combat readiness, according to Generals Hagee and Schoomaker, will be compromised if reset isn't adequately funded.

Members shared their concerns about the potential lack of necessary equipment for state-side Guard and Reserve units, the amount of equipment that may be given to Iraqi and Afghan security forces, and they questioned whether there may be already have shortages of manpower and equipment. General Schoomaker cited 13 consecutive months of meeting recruitment goals and successful retention rates. Plans to reset the Army, he asserted, should be able to complement the need to transform and modernize, and to make sure our forces can deal with the myriad of challenges we face.

The threat of decreased funding, including any reduction in supplemental appropriations, is real and will have devastating consequences, according to the witnesses. General Hagee said that, "Reduction in these accounts would significantly affect the quality of life of our Marines and impact our ability to provide a naval expeditionary presence, capable of relentlessly pursuing terrorist organizations and projecting sustainable forces ashore to conduct the full spectrum of operations – from humanitarian assistance to major combat operations."

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