



HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

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REP. WELDON OPENING STATEMENT

Full Committee Posture Hearing on the Army's Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Request

Washington, D.C. – Chairman Hunter cannot be with us this morning as he is in California recovering from a cold. We wish him a speedy recovery.

This morning, the committee continues its review of the Department of Defense fiscal year 2007 budget request, today hearing from the Department of the Army.

As in years past, this budget cycle poses a number of important policy and budgetary issues that will receive considerable debate and attention over the next few months.

This process is a journey. And at the end of the day, the fundamental issue that this Congress and this Committee must address is whether or not the proposed fiscal year 2007 budget establishes the proper policy framework; funding sufficient to meet current and future national security challenges; and supports the needs of the brave men and women defending our nation around the world.

And General Schoomaker, I agree with the comments you made before us last week. This Army is not broken. In my judgment, it is the most motivated and most magnificent Army in the history of the United States.

I've been to Iraq three times and will be leading another trip to Iraq and Afghanistan in this spring. My experience is that our young men and women are performing superbly under uniquely

challenging circumstances. They are succeeding and they are making a difference. I am very proud of our Army, as I know you are.

With regard to the Army's budget request for fiscal year 2007, I am concerned that, like the overall Pentagon's budget, that it is more a result of an arbitrary budget top line than a realistic consideration of the multitude of threats and resulting requirements facing the nation.

I am not advocating an increased authorization for the sole purpose of an increased top line. We will continue, as we always have, to evaluate budget requests based on the supporting policy and program rationale. However, when one considers the national strategy and the unmet needs of the services in supporting that strategy, as well as reset, restructuring and recapitalization requirements, it appears to come up short. We will have to await a more complete examination of the details of the proposed budget.

This committee, on both sides of the aisle, has questions and concerns that need to be addressed. One of our concerns has to do with the Army's transition to what it calls a modular force. This initiative essentially involves the total redesign of the Army into a more powerful, more flexible force, and moves the Army away from a division-centric structure, to one built around brigade combat teams that include heavy brigades of Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles, light Infantry brigades, and those built around Stryker combat vehicles.

The Army testified last year that the Army's modular initiative required to support the National Military Strategy would require 77 Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), with a possibility of growing to 82. Now, with the receipt of the fiscal year 2007 budget we are being told that only 70 brigade combat teams are required to support the National Military Strategy. Why did it take at least 77 brigade combat teams last year and now it only takes 70? We need to understand how we got from 77 to 70 and the level of risk associated with this decision. One obvious question is: where did the money go?

We are a nation at war. Our objectives are the same. Our first priority must be to support our men and women in uniform. They depend on us. Our nation is depending on them.

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