



## HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

### *PRESS RELEASE*

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## CHAIRMAN HUNTER OPENING STATEMENT

### *Full Committee Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Request for the U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea*

**Washington, D.C.** – For the last few years, the public’s attention has been focused on the Middle East. That’s understandable, but it shouldn’t distract us from national security issues in the rest of the world. Developments in the Pacific are as crucial to our future security as the operations in the Southwest Asia. The Global War on Terror is just that and many of our on-going efforts to combat extremists are taking place in Asia and the Pacific. Indonesia, the Philippines, and the waters of the South China Sea continue to be home to terror groups that seek to do harm and further extremist ideologies. Natural disasters such as the December 2005 tsunami and the recent mudslides in the Philippines highlight the need for ready, responsive forces to come to the aid of our friends and allies in the region. Fortunately, our combatant commanders recognize the challenges in their respective areas of responsibility and are working to get ahead of threats and prepared for unexpected challenges.

In addition to combating terrorism and providing humanitarian relief, our forces in the Pacific must also keep a watchful eye on developments in China. China’s economic expansion and focus on military modernization continues and recent comments made by the National People's Congress indicate that China plans to boost military spending this year by another 15%. This spending trend and the lack of transparency in Chinese intent, fuels increased tensions across the Taiwan Straits. Just this week, the Taiwanese

President scrapped the symbolic unification council and drew angry warnings from Beijing. It is clear that situations such as this can escalate quickly and it threatens American lives and interests in the region.

Of course, the threats to our security don't stop there; North Korea now admits publicly what the intelligence community has concluded openly for years; that it possesses nuclear weapons in violation of all of its Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations. Continued economic strain and Kim Jong-Il's "military first" policy, keep South Korea and its neighbors at risk. General Bell, I look forward to your assessment of the situation on the peninsula and your thoughts about the challenges the world faces in coping with nuclear North Korea.

The recently released Quadrennial Defense Review and the FY07 budget request reflect a global posture realignment to cope these many challenges. I'm concerned however that these adjustments add one more challenge to equation and it is unclear how this transition will be implemented. Military readiness must be maintained in this critical region, even during the Navy's realignment of forces, the Air Force's downsizing, and the Army's transition to modularity.

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