



## HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

### ***PRESS RELEASE***

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### **CHAIRMAN HUNTER OPENING STATEMENT**

#### *Full Committee Hearing on the National Guard's Border Security Mission*

**Washington, D.C.** – The Committee on Armed Services meets this morning to learn more about the administration's plans for using the National Guard to help the Border Patrol secure the United States southwest border. As everyone knows, the President announced a five point immigration reform initiative in a nationally televised address on May 15. One of those five points, and the most important point in my view, is securing the border. To do that, the administration plans to increase the number of Border Patrol agents from around 12,000 to about 18,000, and make greater use of barriers and high tech surveillance on the border.

Since it will take some time to recruit, hire, and train those 6,000 new agents, and it will take considerable logistical know-how and muscle to rapidly construct new barriers and install surveillance systems, the President has asked the National Guard to help in the interim. One thing I am sure of—the National Guard will be up to the task and will perform ably.

What we want to ensure, though, is that the National Guard will be asked to conduct missions appropriate for the skill and training of the unit. While most Americans believe that our borders should be secured, there are understandable international sensitivities to deploying troops to the border. We as a committee must be assured that these troops are trained for the missions they will be asked to perform.

At the same time, I fully support the President's aggressive initiative to secure the southwest border. I have been working on various aspects of this problem since I was first elected to Congress, and I am very pleased the President has given border security the attention it deserves. While the entire border deserves attention, some priorities will have to be established.

In my mind, the first location secured should be the border adjacent to Yuma, Arizona, and the Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma, where up to 25 percent of training days are lost because of illegal aliens straying into the training areas. When that happens, training necessarily stops—no one wants an accidental

death to occur. For the safety of all concerned, including the safety of the Marines who are missing critical training before deployment to the hot combat zones of western Iraq, we must seal the border, starting with Yuma.

We understand that details of the plan are still being worked out, but we would like as much detail today as possible. I note that the Department of Defense is to be “reimbursed” for their work here, but that the “reimbursement” will come from cuts to the previously submitted supplemental request. If we adopted that kind of funding scheme across the federal government, we could save a lot of money.

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