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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 4, 1998

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**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DUNCAN HUNTER**  
**CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY**  
**PROCUREMENT**  
**NAVY/MARINE CORPS MODERNIZATION HEARING**

*March 4, 1998*

This morning, we welcome witnesses from the Navy and Marine Corps as we continue our series of hearings on modernization of the Military Departments for fiscal year 1999.

After years of substantive decline in real terms, we finally see that the Administration has submitted a Navy and Marine Corps procurement budget with modest growth compared to the amount enacted by Congress in FY 98. Last year, we were told that the Navy and Marine Corps procurement budget for FY 99 would come in at \$20.4 billion, and we see that the request stands today at about \$20.2 billion. However, last year we were also told that the FY 00 budget would be \$23.4 billion. This year, we see that next year's plan calls for a 7% reduction in that amount. Overall, the FY 99 to FY 03 Navy and Marine Corps procurement budget shows a 2% drop from the funding plan envisioned only a year ago.

As most of you know, I have been consistently critical of the inadequate levels of procurement funding provided to this Congress by this Administration. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shalikashvili, told the Administration and Congress that procurement funding should have been at \$60 billion by FY 98. In fact, the Administration's FY 95 budget request planned \$60 billion for FY 99. Now, the \$60 billion procurement target has been pushed out to FY 01.

The FY 99 Navy and Marine Corps procurement budget is about 41% of the DOD procurement total. If the \$60 billion objective could have been reached this year, we would be deliberating a budget in this hearing of about \$24.8 billion—22% above where we are now.

Last week, General Krulak, Commandant of the Marine Corps, told the members of the House Appropriations National Security Subcommittee that the Corps had a “procurement shortfall” of half a billion dollars. Also last week, at a hearing in the other Body, Navy Captain Thomas Kilcline, commander of the carrier air wing on the USS Abraham Lincoln, said that his 72 warplanes received one-third fewer training bombs and bullets since training for its last deployment overseas 18 months ago, and that readiness of his combat forces has fallen from 80% to 60%. Just yesterday, again at a hearing in the other Body, Admiral Donald Pilling, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, said that the ‘Navy must buy two more ships per year to retain a 300-ship Navy past 2003.’ Recently, I visited some active duty and reserve combat units, and personnel have shared with me similar stories of underfunded procurement and falling readiness.

If we had a \$60 billion DOD procurement budget with the Navy/Marine Corps share at about \$24.8 billion, this would amount to about \$4.5 billion more than the budget we have before us today. At this level, we could fund General Krulak’s requirement for an additional half-a-billion in procurement. We could also provide many more training munitions and spare parts for Captain Kilcline’s air wing—to stop its declining readiness. Additionally, we could increase the ship construction budget to address Admiral Pilling’s concerns to abate the serious decrease in Navy warships from 333 this year to the currently projected number of 306 in FY 03.

We need to do all of this and more in procurement to provide for tomorrow’s readiness. And we are grateful that the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations and others are beginning to speak out to let the people of this country know what the real story is.