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**STATEMENT OF
HONORABLE DUNCAN HUNTER
B-2 HEARING**

The subcommittee will come to order.

The subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on the performance of the B-2 bomber during the Kosovo air campaign. The B-2 saw its first combat during this conflict and, by all accounts I have seen, the Department of Defense and the Air Force have been very satisfied with its performance. We all know that the B-2 has been a controversial program for many years, and its critics have expressed many concerns about the cost, performance, and maturity of this aircraft. Now we have some ground truth data generated by these recent operations that can shed some light on whether these criticisms were validated.

The purpose of this hearing, then, is to hear directly from the Air Force how well the B-2 performed its mission during the Kosovo conflict, any lessons learned that relate to how its performance might be enhanced in the future, and how we in Congress can contribute to that effort.

To help us do that, I am very pleased to welcome Lt. General Marvin Esmond, the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations, and Brigadier General Leroy Barnidge, the Commander of the 509th Bomb Wing based at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. We expect that both Lt. General Esmond and Brigadier General Barnidge will be able to provide insights into the operational strengths and weaknesses the B-2, and the implications of those strengths and weaknesses for future B-2 employment.

Again, gentlemen, welcome. We're very pleased to have you here, and we appreciate your willingness to appear on such short notice.

With that, I'd like to recognize my good friend and ranking member, Norm Sisisky, for any comments he may have.

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