



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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House Approves Fiscal Year 2005 National Defense Authorization Act
Includes More than \$2 Billion for Protecting Our Troops
Supports Military Personnel and Their Families
Increases Survivor Benefit Plan Payments by Eliminating the "Widow's Tax"

Washington, D.C. – May 20, 2004 – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives approved H.R. 4200, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, on a bipartisan 391 to 34 vote. The legislation authorizes \$422 billion for the Department of Defense and the national security programs of the Department of Energy. H.R. 4200 contains an additional \$25 billion to be appropriated for fiscal year 2005 in support of the war on terror's operational costs, personnel expenses and the procurement of new equipment.

Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter gave the following statement on the House floor:

"Almost three years ago, after the terrorist attacks against our country, we initiated one of the most difficult and complex military campaigns ever undertaken by a nation.

"We aggressively pursued an elusive enemy and, in that pursuit, faced many challenges. Reluctant allies, intimidated in some cases, and complex intelligence problems combined with tactical difficulties to make the going rough. But through it all, we were carried forward by our greatest asset: our troops.

"They killed the enemy at close range in the 10,000-foot mountains of Afghanistan and during fierce fire fights in the choke points of Iraq. They showed courage every bit as pure and honorable as the men who took Normandy and Iwo Jima and Okinawa and Pork Chop Hill and Hue City.

"As we stand here, some are attempting to besmirch the reputation of these fighting forces, pointing to the actions of a handful of rear area soldiers. That attempt to cloud a record of honor is only possible if we allow it to happen. Over a third of a million Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines have served honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 16,000 Bronze Stars have been earned by these Americans, whose names will never grace the front pages of our newspapers or lead the TV news coverage.

"When Master Sergeant Bill Pryor charged an enemy position by himself in the mountains of Afghanistan, killing four terrorists, the last in hand-to-hand combat, he did so without publicity, save the thanks of his platoon members. When Gunnery Sergeant Jeff Bohr gave his life to save

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his wounded Marines, the media barely noticed. It is our job to support these Americans. We can do this by giving them the tools to get the job done.

“This bill does that. With armor, ammunition and technology, with pay increases and combat compensation, health care for guard and reservists, better housing for military families, and much more. In approving this bill, we give in some small measure our thanks, which will never be adequate, to those who protect us. This is a defense bill for the troops.”

Provisions in the legislation include:

Force protection – more than \$2 Billion in equipment to protect our troops

- \$100 million to initiate a new rapid procurement initiative that would help respond to urgent requests for combat equipment by commanders in the battlefield;
- \$829.6 million for production of Up-Armor Humvees, which provide protection for soldiers from anti-personnel, armor piercing munitions and improvised explosive devices (IEDs);
- \$358.2 million for Vehicle Add-On Armor Kits for the Army’s truck fleet;
- \$191.8 million for the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, which transports troops to the battlefield, provides fire cover to dismounted troops, and suppresses enemy tanks and vehicles;
- \$275 million for Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to provide increased surveillance capability, particularly for countering the IED threat;
- \$292.2 million for upgrades to M1A2 Abrams tanks – its capabilities and heavy armor are imperative to force protection; and
- Over \$400 million for new body armor, including add-on covering for the shoulder and side body areas.

Personnel benefits

- A 3.5 percent across-the-board pay raise for members of the armed forces;
- Increasing the maximum amount of hardship duty pay from \$300 to \$750 per month;
- Making permanent the increased rates for imminent danger pay, from \$150 per month to \$225 per month, and family separation allowance, from \$100 per month to \$250 per month;
- Extending through December 31, 2005 several special pays and bonuses for active duty members and reservists;
- Elimination of out-of-pocket housing expenses;
- Enlistment, reenlistment, and retention bonus equity for deployed reservists to ensure that they are paid using the same authority used to pay active duty members;
- Up to \$3,000 per month in income replacement payments for reservists who experience a reduction in their income while away from their civilian jobs; and
- \$9.9 billion for military construction and housing.

Other

- Elimination of the Social Security offset under the Survivor Benefit Plan by increasing the annuities paid to survivors of military retirees who are 62 or older.
- Elimination of the statutory ceiling on the military housing privatization initiative – which allows the Department of Defense to leverage private sector investments and business interests to build and revitalize family housing at domestic military bases.