



HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
March 1, 2006

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CHAIRMAN HUNTER OPENING STATEMENT

Full Committee Posture Hearing on the Department of the Navy's Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Request

Washington, D.C. – We are meeting today to receive testimony on the current state of our United States Navy and United States Marine Corps and to hear about where the Department of Defense wants to take the services as is reflected in the President's Fiscal Year 2007 budget request. Our witnesses today include:

The committee is dedicated with the Department of Defense to ensure that our military remains the best in the world, and is properly manned and equipped to successfully defend the United States and defeat any foe today and into the future. I want to congratulate you for the outstanding job the Navy and Marine Corps have done prosecuting the war on terrorism around the globe as well as providing humanitarian aid at home and abroad. The Marine Corps continues to perform heroically in Iraq and Afghanistan. A month ago I was in the Middle East and saw firsthand the tremendous job the Marines are doing in Iraq. And over the past year the Navy and Marine Corps have been spearheading humanitarian efforts around the globe; in Southwest Asia following the tsunami, in Pakistan after the devastating earthquake, along the Gulf Coast of the U.S. following hurricane Katrina, and most recently in the Philippines in the aftermath of the deadly mudslides.

This year's defense budget requests \$127 billion for the Department of the Navy, which represents a slight loss in buying power from the budget enacted in FY 2006 after considering inflation, pay raises, and the rising cost of oil. So the big question is, "Is it enough?" With the continued demands of the Global War on Terrorism and the aggressive shipbuilding goals recently laid out in the QDR, I'm concerned that the budget before us may be inadequate to both meet today's demands and adequately invest in tomorrow's capabilities.

As you know, the committee is keenly interested in providing our marines and sailors on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan with the best equipment available. During my trip to Iraq last month, I was thoroughly impressed by the professionalism with which the Marine Corp is carrying out its mission. However, American servicemen and women are being killed in steadily mounting numbers by IEDs. We need to do more and I look forward to working with you on this. There has also been much discussion recently about the effectiveness of the body and vehicle armor we have been providing our soldiers and marines. Therefore, I'm anxious to hear what you have to say about this in your testimony today.

I am particularly pleased with the Navy's recently stated goal of developing a stable shipbuilding plan that will eventually build us a 313 ship Navy by 2020. Not only will this provide some predictability to the shipbuilding industry regarding Navy procurement plans but it will also give us in Congress a clear understanding and a certain confidence about the capability that we are buying. However, we are concerned about the affordability of the plan. Even by conservative estimates, the plan will require a sizable increase in the shipbuilding account compared to historic funding levels. And we all know that without an increase in the top line, this increase must come at the expense of something else.

I expect today's hearing will go a long way in answering some of these questions as you walk us through the Navy/Marine Corp FY 2007 budget request and how it supports the results of the Quadrennial Defense Review.

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