



## HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

### *PRESS RELEASE*

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### *House Armed Services Committee Hearing Focuses on Recent Revelation Concerning Weapons of Mass Destruction Found in Iraq*

**Washington, D.C.** — Two panels of witnesses testifying today about approximately 500 chemical munitions found in Iraq—the existence of which was made public only last week by the Director of National Intelligence—largely agreed that these weapons constitute weapons of mass destruction and remain hazardous and potentially lethal.

“I believe they would qualify as chemical weapons and they have been recorded as such,” Army Lt. Gen. Michael D. Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told members of the House Armed Services Committee. He said that “we do assess that the chemical weapons we found are hazardous and could be lethal.” He added that they would be capable of causing mass casualties under certain circumstances.

In his opening statement, Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) said he thought it was important to hold the hearing because “there’s been a lot of confusion” regarding the ongoing program of WMDs in Iraq. He said it was important for a hearing in which the American people and the 922,000 military men and women who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq could hear the facts about what has been revealed regarding these munitions—especially given the contradictory statements, some he called absolute denials, that any weapons were ever found in Iraq.

The full committee met in open session to discuss recently declassified portions of a classified report that states that coalition forces have recovered about 500 munitions—exact numbers, as well as the purity of the chemicals contained within the munitions and the methods by which they were collected were to be discussed in a closed, classified session following the public hearing.

In his opening remarks, Rep. Curt Weldon, (R-PA), who chaired the bulk of the hearing at Hunter’s request, pointed to several statements made two weeks ago on the floor of the House during the debate on the Iraq resolution that denied the existence of WMDs. Weldon quoted one member of the House as saying: “We are certain that Iraq does not possess weapons of mass destruction—and never did.”

Weldon asked if Iraq is a “WMD-free zone,” to which Maples responded, “I would not say that, sir.” In fact, Maples said, “Our concern is, what else is out there?” He also indicated that there are still significant numbers of people searching for WMDs in Iraq.

Addressing speculations that the munitions—containing mustard and sarin nerve agent—were produced in the 1980s and would thus contain badly-degraded and no-longer-harmful chemical agents, Maples said that he was not aware of a cutoff date, adding that the weapons “still have chemical capabilities.”

Sarin is a second generation chemical agent and is among the most lethal.

Hunter recalled an instance in which a couple of soldiers who were disposing of munitions became ill from exposure to similar weapons.

“There are WMDs,” said Rep. John McHugh (R-NY), adding, “I find it surrealistic that we’re discussing the birthday of a weapon in regards to its ability to affect human life.”

Responding to McHugh’s question about whether there is a state below which sarin becomes non-toxic, Colonel John M. Chiu, Commander, National Ground Intelligence Center, said that “anything above zero would prove to be toxic and, if exposed to it long enough, lethal.” Echoing Maples’ observation that the weapons recovery program is ongoing, he added, “I don’t believe we have found all the weapons. We believe there are more out there.”

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr., President and CEO of the Center for Security Policy, started off a second panel of civilian witnesses, saying, “I find particularly offensive the assertion that ‘Bush lied’” with regard to the existence of WMDs in Iraq. Gaffney also said that he takes exception to efforts to deprecate the lethality of the discovered munitions.

In his prepared statement, Gaffney addressed those who say the United States went to war over different weapons: “One point that will be particularly relevant to my subsequent treatment of the new revelations about the discovery in Iraq of hundreds of ‘pre-Gulf War’ chemical munitions is the fact that those were precisely the WMDs Saddam was supposed to destroy. He was not supposed to manufacture any others. Suggestions that we subsequently went to war only over *different* weapons, produced post-Gulf War, are erroneous and misleading.” He noted during questioning that there were “hot production lines” of more advanced kinds of weapons of mass destruction, and plans to use them against the U.S.

Gaffney also addressed the idea that Iraq’s former leader may have moved weapons out of Iraq before the war: “There is now a body of evidence that Saddam Hussein went to considerable lengths to move quantities of weapons of mass destruction from Iraq into Syria and Lebanon. A former Iraqi general, Georges Sada, has confirmed that he was charged with organizing an airlift for this purpose using the national airline’s civilian jets. Tape recordings recently—and outrageously belatedly—made public by the Director of National Intelligence, John Negroponte, have confirmed that the direction for air-and land-transport of WMDs was ordered at the highest levels of Saddam’s government in the run-up to the invasion. There have also been reports that Russian special forces and intelligence personnel assisted in the effort to eliminate evidence of Iraq’s WMD programs and Kremlin involvement in them.”

In his written testimony, Terence Taylor, current Director of the International Council for the Life Sciences and former commissioner to the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraq from 1993-95, referred to the danger of insurgents obtaining such weapons: “You are considering one of the dangers to be that insurgents might incorporate these weapons in an improvised explosive device (IED). Used in this way it would complicate casualty handling, treatment of wounds and cleaning up the scene of an incident.”

David Kay, the first director of the CIA Iraq Survey Group, was the one witness who expressed disagreement about the lethality of the munitions. However, he stressed that “Iraq was actually a more dangerous place than we assumed in the NIE [National Intelligence Estimate]. Iraq was a vortex of corruption, filled with people who were capable to make WMD, who knew all the secrets, who were in that vortex of corruption, willing to sell their skills to the highest bidder.”

Both Gaffney and Kay said they were not surprised at the existence of these weapons. In his written remarks, Gaffney said, “The only real surprise is that it has taken so long for the U.S. government to acknowledge these finds. I believe that both the public and President Bush have been badly served by withholding of such information.” Kay said that what he did find surprising is the report that deals with the 500 munitions remains classified and unavailable.

Weldon repeatedly called for the classified report to be declassified to the maximum extent possible. He also requested that the intelligence community report to the Congress in an unclassified nature on the lethality of these types of munitions. Weldon said, “I don’t want to keep the American people in the dark about the evidence of WMD in Iraq—I think they deserve to know what we’re finding over there.”

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