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The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for inviting me to the White House last week to discuss your recent meeting with other leaders of the Group of Eight industrialized nations. You may recall that I raised deep concerns about the state of our Army's readiness. Readiness levels are dire, critical time has been lost, and urgent action is needed now to ensure our Army continues to be able to defend this nation.

While Chief of Staff of the Army in July 1940, General George Marshall wrote, "Today time is the dominant factor in the problem of national defense. For almost twenty years we had all of the time and almost none of the money; today we have all of the money and no time." Currently we have neither the money nor the time. There is no time to lose in addressing this issue. The funds the Army needs must be put forward beginning now.

Mr. President, you came into office rightly concerned about the state of our military's readiness. In 2000, you pointed out that two divisions were below required readiness levels and would not be able to report for duty if called. Today unclassified Army briefing charts show two-thirds of the brigade combat teams in our operating force are unready. Nearly every non-deployed combat brigade in the active Army is reporting that they are not ready to complete their assigned wartime missions. When I asked General Schoomaker in recent testimony if he was comfortable with the readiness level for the non-deployed units located within the continental United States, he simply answered no.

The risk these figures represent to the security of this nation is unacceptable. You well know that we live in a complex world where situations like those in Iran, North Korea, and the Middle East can grow more dangerous very quickly. We also must be prepared for the threats we may not foresee wherever we may encounter them—from our own hemisphere to the farthest reaches of the globe. Our military, and our Army in particular, is a powerful deterrent to our adversaries and gives us the ability to defeat them if deterrence fails. With our current readiness figures, we are at serious risk of not being able to defend this nation without unacceptable losses. We risk sending the wrong signal about our capabilities and emboldening our enemies. We must defend this nation and our national interests through military strength; we must reverse this trend.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

July 25, 2006

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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, STAFF DIRECTOR

General Schoomaker has been very clear with the Armed Services Committee about what it will take to begin to get the Army healthy. In the Fiscal Year 2006 supplemental, the Army requested \$13.5 billion to reset equipment consumed in the war effort. Yet, Congress never saw this full request. It was cut after review by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). After Congress acted on that reduced request, the Army was left with a \$4.9 billion shortfall. I cannot understand, with the readiness of the Army and the defense of the nation at stake, why elements of the administration would not send forward a request for the full amount of the Army's needs.

For Fiscal Year 2007, General Schoomaker has testified that the Army needs \$17.1 billion to meet its reset needs. This is a huge figure, exacerbated by last year's reduced request, and now the funds are urgently needed. Yet, Congress has not seen a request for the full amount. The Army cannot afford to wait and the nation cannot afford to wait; we must begin now.

Congress must do its part and we will. I will work with the conferees to the defense authorization bill and our appropriations colleagues to add as much of this funding as we can to the Fiscal Year 2007 bill. But our budget allocations were based on the administration estimates of the Army's needs. These estimates did not include the full amount of the Army's actual requirements.

Therefore, Mr. President, I would respectfully call upon you to do two things. First, I would suggest you direct OMB to begin work immediately on an emergency supplemental spending request that would be sent to Congress on the first day of the new fiscal year to cover all needed Army requirements related to readiness and reset funding that cannot be covered in the Fiscal Year 2007 defense bill, as well as any funds needed by other services in these categories. Second, the Army estimates it will need at least \$12 billion annually for the next several years. Therefore, in future years, your budget requests to Congress, forwarded through the Department of Defense and OMB, should fully cover the Army's readiness and equipment needs.

This is a multi-year problem that will take sustained commitment to fix. It will take billions of dollars and the commitment of both parties and both branches of government. Nothing short of the security of our nation depends on getting this right. I am committed to working with you and my colleagues here to doing so.

Sincerely



Ike Skelton
Ranking Democrat

Cc: The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
The Honorable Francis Harvey
General Peter Schoomaker
Chairman Duncan Hunter