

April 18, 2007 Murtha Calls for Responsibility on the part of the President

For Immediate Release

April 18, 2007

Murtha calls for responsibility on the part of the President

"If the President insists on continuing the current operational tempo and policy, then he should call for a military draft. That is the responsible thing to do."

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, issued the following remarks today while discussing Army personnel issues:

"I just returned from visiting three major army bases: Ft. Hood, Ft. Stewart and Ft. Bragg.

"What I found was that the President's policy has forced the military to break its own rotation and deployment guidelines. Our forces have had to accelerate training, they have had to train on inadequate and insufficient equipment, and percentages have been deployed a third and fourth time.

"I discussed the length of deployments with a group of commanders who told me that more than nine months deployed in theater was harmful to them and their families. They were not complaining; rather they candidly acknowledged that after a certain amount of time, professional skills begin to diminish and extended tours could very well push soldiers and leaders beyond what is reasonable.

"I found a need for counseling for our military children and was told that the truancy rate is increasing while their academic performance is declining. A first sergeant commented, "We love being soldiers but we are also people with families and children. When we're not soldiers we're soccer coaches, Cub Scout leaders, and we're involved in our local P.T.A." Fifteen months from home significantly impacts the military family. Another soldier who had already served three tours said, "I just can't bear to tell my kids that I am being deployed again and that my tour will be extended beyond a year."

"Our Army will do what is asked of them, but it is unconscionable to ask the same men and women, who have deployed three or four times and who have already served a year in intensive combat, to now extend their time in theater for an additional three months. As one soldier put it, "after six months in Iraq, every day is another Groundhog Day."

"Our military has done a tremendous job with what has been asked of them. They have juggled and balanced with what they have, but what they have is not enough. The president asks the impossible and the burden continues to fall on the very few. The pressure must be taken off the current force and their families who have already sacrificed so much. If the President insists on continuing the current operational tempo and policy, then he should call for a military draft. That is the responsible thing to do."