

September 13, 2007 Murtha Dedicates Walter Reed Military Advanced Training Center

For Immediate Release

September 13, 2007

Murtha Dedicates Walter Reed Military Advanced Training Center

Washington D.C. - Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, today joined General Richard Cody, Vice Chief of Staff Army, Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson, and General (ret) Fred Franks to dedicate the state of the art Military Advanced Training Center at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C.

The 31,000 square-foot facility will offer state-of-the art physical therapy and occupational therapy, sports programs, virtual reality systems and training with prosthetics to help wounded troops regain a range of abilities. The center has a weapons simulator, a vehicle simulator, climbing ropes, a climbing wall and a rappelling wall, treadmills, elliptical trainers, and a running track. The funding for the \$10 million Military Advanced Training Center was approved by Congress in 2004 and the Army began construction on this center last November.

"As most of you know, for the last 20 years I have been deeply involved with ensuring that our military and their families have the healthcare they need.

"I've tried to visit every major military hospital in the world, and I have always been impressed by the military caregivers. Our doctors, nurses and administrators work round-the-clock saving lives and treating the physical and mental wounds of our service members.

"They don't always have the personnel and facilities that are needed, but their work is always first class.

"Today's modern technology and equipment is saving the lives of thousands of our men and women. During WWII and Vietnam, fewer than 8 of every 10 wounded service members survived. In today's war, 9 of every 10 wounded service members survive. Nearly 30,000 brave American men and women have been wounded thus far in both Iraq and Afghanistan. They deserve the thanks of a grateful nation, they deserve our support, but they also deserve the best care in the world.

"When I visit with our wounded troops, I am inspired by their courage and I am inspired by the dedication of their families.

"I met a young soldier at Walter Reed whose leg was badly damaged in the fall of 2005. He was from Pittsburgh and was dressed in a Steelers shirt and shorts. There was one Steelers game left in the season and I asked him if he'd like to go to the game and sit with the Rooney family. The Rooneys got him and his friends to the game and even introduced them to the team.

"A month later, I was back at Walter Reed and met a young soldier from New Kensington who lost his leg in Iraq. I told him the story and he told me that he, too, was a Steelers fan. I said 'but there are no more games this season' and he said 'well there is the Super Bowl.' I gave him my tickets to the Super Bowl and he was able to go to Detroit with his brother to watch the game. What impressed me most about him was his determination to not let his injury stop him from doing the things he loved most. It was marvelous how hard he worked to overcome obstacles and he became an inspiration for others at Walter Reed to overcome theirs.

"I remember visiting and later speaking with Bob Woodruff and Kimberly Dozier, both journalists who were badly wounded in Iraq. Military medics on the ground and military hospitals saved their lives. The outstanding personalized care that they received is what we are committed to providing every service person who is disabled.

"Part of that commitment is why we are here today - to dedicate this world-class rehabilitation facility. I am proud of the Army, and in particular Major David Rozelle, for supervising the design and construction of this superb center. This Military Advanced Training Center will guide our amputees to recovery and it will help them to build the strength to move their lives forward."