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For Immediate Release

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Washington D.C.- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, today joined Congressman Dave Obey, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee to discuss Iraq war funding.

The following are excerpts from Murtha's remarks:

This week around our Thanksgiving tables there will be two families, one who say they support the troops, and they do, but they have sacrificed little during this time of War. And the other, our military families, who have husbands and wives, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters in the war theater. It is they who shoulder the burden of the President's Iraq policy, and America owes them our thanks.

But we owe them more than just a debt of gratitude. We owe our troops the best that this country has to offer, today and in the futures. And we owe them and their families a new way, a way that leads home. But this President seems interested only in his own way.

Two weeks ago, the Congress delivered a \$459 BILLION defense bill to the President. This bi-partisan bill fully funds our military operations for the upcoming fiscal year. This bill provides robust funding to take care of our military families, to fully train and equip our forces and to prepare our military for the future.

Rather than working with Congress on a responsible war-spending package, this Administration is executing a plan to plunder from these essential base budget accounts in order to fund a continuation of the President's misguided war.

Last week, the House delivered a \$50 billion supplemental that provides the President, our troops, and our nation with a responsible plan to transition the role of the U.S. military in Iraq and with a realistic goal to bring them home by next Christmas.

The bill responsibly ensures that our troops are fully trained and equipped before they are sent to Iraq; it extends the Army field manual to all personnel, making torture not only unacceptable but unlawful; and transitions our forces from a combat role to specifically supporting counterterrorism operations in the region.

Once again, the President responded with more rhetoric and threats. He blames Congress for not providing him with additional funding but flatly refuses to work with us on a solution. What he fails to mention is that he could have the money in two days if he picks up the phone and asks his Republican allies in the Senate to pass the House's war funding bill.

While Congress is working to improve the quality of life for our troops, this Administration is working to reverse these efforts.

There is a difference between supporting our military and their families and supporting the war in Iraq. This administration supports its war. This Congress supports our troops and their families.

Politics pales next to the needs of our troops. For too long this Administration has ignored the negative impact that repeated and extended deployments have on our service members and their families. The Democrats in Congress insist that these needs be addressed and over the past year we have added significant funding to address these crucial needs.

Over the past several spending bills, Congress provided \$21 billion for MRAP vehicles, fully funding the military's requirement. Only recently did the Administration ask for this funding, which greatly increases protection of our sons and daughters in uniform.

Congress added \$237 million for Family Advocacy Programs to bolster support for families of deployed service members. These essential services include prevention and treatment of child and spouse abuse, as well as providing assistance to severely injured service members and their families.

In addition, Congress added millions of dollars for counseling and child care needs, to help alleviate the mental stresses brought on by excessive and extended deployments. Bases that I visited reported that child truancy rates were up and grades were falling. Instead of working with Congress on the \$50 billion supplemental bill, this Administration wants to terminate counselor services for returning Soldiers and Families, as well as close child care centers, libraries, family and youth activities.

Congress added \$616 million to upgrade home-base facilities, upgrades that include additional barracks and child care centers, because we believe it is of utmost importance for our deployed troops to return home to quality living and working environments.

Congress added \$17 billion for equipment maintenance, rehabilitation and upgrades, particularly for the Guard and Reserve, which in turn provide thousands of jobs at our military depots. The President didn't request these funds and instead of working with Congress on the \$50 billion supplemental, threatens to furlough civilian employees and shut down depot operations in order to continue his war in Iraq.

Congress added \$900 million for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic brain injury and is insisting on an organized program to quickly detect and treat these hallmark injuries of this war. The Administration asked for only \$7 million for traumatic brain injury and did little to address the problems associated with PTSD.

Proper training is absolutely necessary for efficient military operations and the survivability of our troops. Training is the key to our military future - the soldiers we train today will be in uniform long after this Administration is out of office.

The House, on more than one occasion, has passed language insisting that all troops who deploy to Iraq be fully trained. The Administration is against this requirement. Instead of approving the \$50 billion dollar supplemental, the Administration threatens to take money from the Training Operations accounts, which could result in all training being stopped.

The Congress has taken the necessary steps to honor the commitment of our military and military families by adding services which have been essentially ignored by this Administration. But in order to continue the war in Iraq on its own terms, this Administration chooses to take funds from the programs and services of greatest benefit to our troops and their families.

In threatening another veto and electing to divert funds away from our military at home, this Administration has found yet another way to thwart the will of the American people, who support our military but want to end this war.

Instead of taking from vital base budget accounts that truly do support our troops and their families, I urge the President to promptly work with Congress on passage of the House's war funding bill.