

February 13, 2008 - Opening Statement at Today's DoD Budget Overview Hearing

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, issued the following opening statement today before the FY09 DoD Budget Overview hearing with Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, and DoD Comptroller Tina Jonas:

"One year ago, this subcommittee learned about the deplorable conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

"Our military/civilian doctors and nurses are outstanding.

"My concern has been with the leadership of this department, who were starving for years the base operations and other essential services of this premier medical facility.

"I visit Walter Reed and Bethesda repeatedly, and constantly ask them what they need. They were intimidated by this civilian leadership.

"Almost two-thirds of our amputees receive care at Walter Reed, yet this subcommittee had to fight the department for years to get the amputee center built. We provided millions of dollars for maintenance costs, yet the department resisted our efforts to maintain and modernize medical facilities.

"These aren't problems with funding, these are policy problems, and they are intolerable.

"Secretary Gates is getting great care today because we have great care givers and because of the work that Congress has done to ensure that our troops have the resources they need.

"Last year, we provided \$400 million for Family Advocacy Programs. Today's budget cuts this funding by 39 percent.

"We've seen a deterioration of military recruitment standards. Since the invasion of Iraq, the percentage of Army recruits with a high school diploma has decreased from 94 percent to 71 percent. Before the war began, 4.6 percent of Army recruits required a waiver for a criminal record; today that figure has risen to 11.2 percent.

"We're still continuing the policy of Stop-Loss, five years after the fact.

"I have said repeatedly that this war falls on one-half of one-percent of the American public. Even this is not quite true. Only 63 percent of our active Army has been deployed in this conflict. The remainders have been deployed over,

and over, and over again.

“I received a letter this week from a young Sergeant. He is on his fourth deployment and knows fellow soldiers that are on their fifth. His concern is that we are grossly mismanaging personnel. He says the Army is not reaching out to those that haven’t been deployed. Mr. Secretary we ask that you look into this problem, and we’re going to do the same.

“Our troops and their families deserve better.”

FY09 Defense Base Budget Overview HearingHouse Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense

February 13, 2008

Statement for the Record - Chairman John P. Murtha

Excluding Military Construction and Family Housing, a total of \$491.0 billion is requested for the FY 2009 base budget programs of the Department of Defense. This is an increase of about \$31.7 billion over last year’s enacted budget level of \$459.3 billion, representing an increase of nearly 7%. The lion’s share of the increase over FY 2008 (some 74%) is allocated to the military personnel and the operation and maintenance accounts, while the DoD’s investment (procurement and research and development programs) accounts showed more modest increases.

The Department is requesting funds for more troops, more operations, more equipment, more ships, and more aircraft than was approved for 2008. The largest year-to-year change by far is in the Operation and Maintenance accounts, with all the Services requesting significantly increased funding levels, totaling an increase of \$14.7 billion. These increases range from the Navy/Marine Corps requesting an increase of \$3.1 billion to the Air Force request of an additional \$4.5 billion over the FY 2008 level. These increases are generally due to efforts to increase ground capabilities, improve readiness, increase equipment maintenance, and address increased Air Force flying hour costs. The request for the Defense Health Program remains relatively flat at \$23.6 billion when compared to the FY 2008 enacted level of \$23.5 billion.

The \$8.8 billion increase for the Military Personnel accounts is largely driven by efforts of the Army and Marine Corps to increase the size of their active forces. Another significant cost driver in these personnel accounts is a pay raise of 3.4% for our servicemen and women. However, the overall focus of the Military Personnel accounts this year seems to be recruiting and retention, which is logical considering the efforts to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps.

The modest increases seen in the investment accounts (\$5.2 billion in procurement and \$3.1 billion in research and development) are indicative of the struggle the Department faces in trying to reconstitute and recapitalize their equipment while increasing their pace of current operations. The increased procurement funding would purchase more Army and Navy aircraft than the FY 2008 funding, however the Air Force aircraft quantities would show a small decrease, despite the fact that the Department has requested increased aircraft funding for the Air Force. The Navy has requested a quantity of 7 ships, once again falling short of the quantity needed to reach their stated fleet size of 313 ships.

The Pentagon also is seeking war supplemental funding for FY 2009 in the form of a bridge fund. This FY 2009 bridge

fund request is for \$70 billion although the Department has yet to provide the details behind the request. Secretary Gates has recently been quoted as saying that it "probably makes sense to pause troop withdrawals from Iraq in late summer". The Committee will consider the supplemental request while evaluating real time events such as the comments from Secretary Gates. Additionally, the Committee is still in the process of considering the remainder of the fiscal year 2008 request for supplemental funding. The remaining request totals \$100 billion (in addition to the \$70 billion appropriated in last year's omnibus appropriation). This request covers funding for operations and personnel for the last six months of the year, as well as the majority of war related equipment required to replace lost or aging equipment as a result of the war.

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