

May 15, 2008 - Murtha calls for a National Security Strategy to Identify both the Near-term and Long-term Threats to the U.S.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, made the following floor remarks today during Congressional debate of the supplemental war spending bill:

Note - Chairman Murtha is referring to the comments Secretary of Defense Robert Gates made this week before the Heritage Foundation.

I was disappointed to hear the Secretary of Defense say that the U.S. military must prepare more for fighting future wars against insurgents and militias such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, rather than spend time and money preparing for conventional conflicts.

Overemphasizing the Department's focus on training and equipping for counterinsurgency missions appears to be simply a rationalization of short-term budget decisions made in the waning months of this Administration.

These decisions have left the Armed Forces in a degraded state of readiness; they have left the facilities that directly impact service personnel quality of life in disrepair; and they have left many Defense acquisition programs broken or badly damaged. These decisions fail to take into account the potential missions U.S. Armed Forces must prepare for, and may have to undertake, in the years ahead.

I find these comments questionable at a time when not one combat unit in the United States is rated as combat ready.

We need a National Security Strategy to identify both the near-term and long-term threats to this country. We need a vigorous debate to achieve this strategy – this hasn't happened since the Cold War.

This country spends more money on intelligence than all the nations of the world combined, and as I've observed our intelligence is about as accurate as Punxsutawney Phil – 50 percent. 50 percent is unacceptable.

We can no longer be the world's policeman. We need to rebuild our diplomatic alliances and we need to restore our international credibility.

Our military and diplomatic force must include the strength of our allies. We cannot do it alone. For the past eight years, we've looked at the world through solely a U.S. military lens. We've learned that this does not work.

It is time to look beyond Iraq and focus on future threats. This bill does that, and it accomplishes two objectives:

1) It focuses on improving the readiness and capability of our non- deployed units.

2) And in the absence of a National Security Strategy, it provides our military with equipment that will prepare them to face future threats under any scenario. Not only to fight a war, but to prevent a war.

This bill includes:

\$3.6 billion to procure 15 C-17 aircraft

\$2.5 billion to procure 34 C-130 aircraft

\$750 million for National Guard and Reserve Equipment

\$1.5 billion for HMMWVs

\$3 billion for Medium and Heavy Tactical Trucks

\$500 million for Army and Marine Corps Facility Maintenance and Repairs (this includes barracks)

\$300 million for Facility Maintenance and Repairs at DoD medical treatment facilities

\$570 million for treatment and research activities within the Defense Health Program

I'm proud of this bill and I urge the members to vote in favor of it.

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