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For Immediate Release

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(Cleveland, OH) - Congressman John Murtha focused on how his plan for Iraq will strengthen our military and our nation in a speech today before the City Club of Cleveland.

Murtha talks about "the three R's" - to redeploy to the periphery of Iraq, to reallocate funding from the war to our unmet homeland security needs and to re-engage with other countries to put pressure on Afghanistan and fight a more effective war on true terrorism.

His prepared remarks follow:

Comments by Congressman John P. Murtha on his Redeployment Plan

We should embrace change, especially when it is in our national interest to do so!

As many of you know, I introduced a Resolution to the House of Representatives to redeploy our troops from Iraq.

Some critics have described my recommendation as "defeatist;" others have characterized it as "cut and run."

They couldn't be more wrong! Nothing could be further from the truth!

My recommendations are a clarion call for a victory against the international terrorist movement.

It is a three-step process.

(1) Redeploy. It is time that our military "footprint" in the region is converted from a pervasive presence inside Iraq to a powerful quick-reaction force outside of Iraq. Over three years after we implemented a policy to "liberate" Iraq and bring democracy with the claim we would be welcomed with rose petals, almost one out of two Iraqis believe it's OK to kill Americans. Our presence in Iraq is generating more recruits to the radical movement. Our departure would put tremendous pressures on the major factions within Iraq to have some semblance of a political settlement. I believe that upon our departure, Iraqi nationalism would force many Iraqis to turn on the foreign fighters.

(2) Reallocate. I believe we should reallocate much of the funds saved by redeploying.

(3) Re-engage. In the wake of 9/11, America had overwhelming support around the world in the fight against terrorism. There was global support for our war in Afghanistan. Sadly, the diversion to the war in Iraq has frittered away much of that support and we must re-engage with countries around the world to conduct a more-effective war on terrorism. I believe our redeploying troops from Iraq will help considerably in that goal.

The President is using fear to keep our troops in Iraq - fear of what might happen if we leave Iraq. He is saying we should have an open-ended commitment to stay in Iraq, yet he has NO plan. His plan is to cross his fingers and hope that the Iraqis will form a unity government. But hope is not a plan. And for as long as he continues down this vague, open-ended path, more American lives will be lost, and billions of more dollars will be spent.

It is time to change direction. We should fear only our failure to change. Iraq today is not stable and is not safe. The Iraqis must decide that stability and safety are worth fighting for. An all-out effort must be made by the Iraqis to solve the problems and challenges that are facing them.

Today our military is unsurpassed in terms of strength, training and technology. We thought our military could do anything, but we found something we could not do. They are not a world police force. They are trained to destroy an enemy, which they do very well. But they are not trained to be policemen, or nation builders, or diplomats, and yet that is what they are being asked to do every day.

Let's talk more about my plan:

First, my plan will strengthen, not weaken, the military. My plan will strengthen and not weaken our nation.

What do I mean by redeployment to the periphery? Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Turkey and/or Qatar.

How many? One division.

In addition, we must replace the people responsible for the failed plan. We will not be able to get international help without it. It must be seen as a change in direction.

I do not believe things will be completely peaceful when we redeploy, but a democracy and a seated government does not guarantee complete peace either. There may be additional sectarian strife, but our troops will not be caught in the middle of it. We will have a quick reactionary force available to deploy if necessary.

In the meantime, we can be rebuilding and strengthening our military and our nation, and can begin taking care of the problems our warfighters will be facing when they return home.

Here is what we can buy with money we are currently spending on the war:

At the administration's current average rate of spending, it will take 47 years to implement the security requirements needed to secure our ports. Yet we can accomplish this with just one month of war spending.

Our local police, fire and emergency responders are dangerously underfunded. About \$19.6 billion is needed over the next five years to meet these needs. We can accomplish this with about 3 1½ months of war spending.

As of fiscal year 2006, despite terrorist attacks on transit systems in Japan and Spain, less than \$550 million had been provided to improve rail and transit security since Sept. 11. The transit industry estimates that about \$6 billion is needed to make the necessary security enhancements. One month of war funding can pay for this.

The president's budget for FY 2007 increases health care premiums for 3.1 million on our nation's military retirees under 65. Premiums will double and triple, and drug co-payments will increase, costing our military retirees \$2.4 billion over 5 years. We can roll back the president's budget recommendations with less than a half a month of war spending.

The administration says they are in Iraq for the long haul. The president says we will stay. But meanwhile, he stops reconstruction projects and funding with no plan to re-start the projects. He cuts the budgets for State Department programs that promote democracy, even those with proven track records. Is this the picture of an administration that plans on staying in Iraq? No, this is the picture of an administration that knows they are getting out. They agree with me, but just won't admit it. This is the picture of an administration that just won't admit it was wrong.

Here's where we differ. I will not tolerate even one additional death. To me, 30 deaths a month is not an improvement. It is a tragedy to the family who lost a son or daughter, a mother or father. Not to mention the casualties. They gave their healthy sons and daughters to us, and we return to them a child without arms, legs or with severe brain injuries. If we can avoid these casualties we should.

Secretary Rumsfeld's legacy was that we can do anything with a smaller, lighter and more lethal force. Well, he was wrong when it came to Iraq. He just won't admit it.

And the president's major foreign policy initiative was to create an area in the Mideast friendly to the West. Spreading democracy was supposed to be the cure for instability. The president was wrong, and he just won't admit it.

It's time for a change in direction.