

## May 18, 2006 Murtha Statement on Haditha Incident

For Immediate Release

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Washington D.C. - The following is a statement from Congressman Murtha regarding the incident at Haditha:

I am a Vietnam combat veteran. I understand full well the type of situation those Marines were in. These are allegations. I believe that the case should and will be fully investigated and that the Marines involved will be treated fairly by the military justice system.

I talk to commanders and soldiers all the time about the circumstances they face in Iraq. I talk to not only the brass at the Pentagon, but to the officers in the field and the soldiers I see every week at Bethesda and Walter Reed medical centers with their arms and legs blown off by IEDs. I am acutely aware of the type of situation those Marines were in. Our soldiers are incredibly brave and are fighting in an extremely difficult combat environment with extremely difficult rules of engagement. They perform heroically and have been for going on four years now, with very few exceptions. As a nation, we can be extremely proud of the conduct of our US military.

As I've said, I understand the fog of war and the confusion of battle. But we are a nation of laws, including the UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice). The United States of America has never condoned, nor should it ever condone, indiscriminate, deliberate killing of civilians. When we do that, we become no better than the enemy we are trying to eradicate.

Further, to ignore this incident, which happened six months ago and has now been publicized around the world, is to invite criticism that the United States does not practice what it preaches. That will severely undermine our goals of promoting democracy, as did the Abu Ghraib scandal. Again, the United States of America does not condone the deliberate killing of innocent civilians.