

June 21, 2006 Murtha statement on murdered soldiers

For Immediate Release

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Washington D.C. - Below is Congressman John Murtha's statement on American soldiers who were ambushed and murdered in Iraq last week:

"I am appalled that while manning a traffic checkpoint near Baghdad, three of our valiant soldiers were ambushed - one killed on the spot and two kidnapped, tortured and brutally killed. It is essential that we find the circumstances of their deaths. Why were they in such an isolated situation without additional back-up, and who is responsible for these heinous acts?

"Despite our most strenuous security efforts in the Baghdad area over the past several days, this area continues to be rocked by violent attacks, kidnappings and murderous acts, frequently aimed at our troops.

"I continue to be concerned with the fact that our military men and women fighting in Iraq often tell me that they do not know who the enemy is. They do not know whom they can trust, and they are concerned that their camps have been infiltrated by Iraqis who are plotting to kill them. One day the Iraqis are smiling and waving at them on the streets; the next day the same people are throwing grenades at them.

"I read that Army investigators discovered that two California soldiers had been shot to death by Iraqi defense officers who were patrolling with them.

"We have all read countless stories of Iraqis being kidnapped and killed by Iraqis bearing the identification or uniforms of the official Iraqi security force.

"As I have said before, Iraq is not overrun by foreign terrorists. It is Iraqis fighting Iraqis, and Iraqis fighting U.S. and coalition forces. Our troops have become the target.

"As Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who at the time of his retirement from the U.S. Army was the most highly decorated and youngest four-star general, recently stated, 'The foreign fighters remain a tactical menace; however, they are a minor threat to the heavily armed and wary U.S. forces. The al-Qaeda in Iraq is now largely Sunni Iraqi, not foreign fighters.'"

"Consider these facts:

"Very little of the insurgency in Iraq is made up of foreign fighters - less than seven percent - and even fewer are Al Qaeda, maybe 750 to 1,000.

"Forty-seven percent of Iraqis feel they are justified to kill Americans.

"Just a few days ago an aide to Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki was quoted as saying: 'There's some sort of preliminary understanding between us and the MNF-I, the U.S.-led Multi-National Force-Iraq, that there is a patriotic feeling among the Iraqi youth and the belief that those attacks are legitimate acts of resistance and defending their homeland. These people will be pardoned definitely, I believe.'

"When I retired from the Marine Corps, I was given a plaque that said, 'Complete Victory is knowing your enemy.'

"Iraq's vice president and president have asked for a scheduled withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq. It's time for the Iraqis to be responsible for their own destiny."