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## CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE, OF TEXAS

### STATEMENT Special Order on Conduct of Iraq War

JULY 10, 2006

Thank you for yielding. I commend my colleagues for organizing this special order to discuss the conduct and costs of the war in Iraq. I look forward to engaging in dialogue with my colleagues about the most important issue facing the country today and the most fateful and ill-considered decision of this Administration.

#### **I. The Bush Iraq Policy Has Harmed The U.S. Military**

A few weeks ago we learned the sad news that the 2,500<sup>th</sup> soldier has been killed in Iraq. More than 19,000 others have been wounded. The Bush administration's open-ended commitment of U.S. troops to Iraq has

weakened the U.S. Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserves. The extended deployments in Iraq have eroded U.S. ground forces and overall military strength. A Pentagon-commissioned study concluded that *the Army cannot maintain its current pace of operations in Iraq without doing permanent damage to the quality of the force*. So more than three years of a continuous deployment of U.S. troops to Iraq has:

- Contributed to serious problems with recruitment, with the U.S. Army missing its recruitment targets last year;
- Forced the Army to lower its standards for military recruits; and
- Led to military equipment shortages that hamper the ability of U.S. ground forces to do their job in Iraq and around the world.

## **II. THE IRAQ WAR HAS BEEN MISMANAGED AND THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN DISASTROUS**

### *QUOTES FROM THE RETIRED GENERALS CALLING FOR THE OUSTER OF DEFENSE SECRETARY DONALD H. RUMSFELD:*

"We went to war with a flawed plan that didn't account for the hard work to build the peace after we took down the regime. We also served under a secretary of defense who didn't understand leadership, who was abusive, who was arrogant, who didn't build a strong team."

— *Retired Army Maj. Gen. John Batiste*

"My sincere view is that the commitment of our forces to this fight was done with a casualness and swagger that are the special province of those who have never had to execute these missions — or bury the results."

— *Retired Marine Lt. Gen. Gregory Newbold*

"They only need the military advice when it satisfies their agenda. I think that's a mistake, and that's why I think he should resign."

— *Retired Army Maj. Gen. John Riggs*

"We grow up in a culture where accountability, learning to accept responsibility, admitting mistakes and learning from them was critical to us. When we don't see that happening it worries us. Poor military judgment has been used throughout this mission."

— *Retired Marine Gen. Anthony Zinni, former chief of U.S. Central Command*

"I really believe that we need a new secretary of defense because Secretary Rumsfeld carries way too much baggage with him. ... I think we need senior military leaders who understand the principles of war and apply them ruthlessly, and when the time comes, they need to call it like it is."

— *Retired Army Maj. Gen. Charles Swannack*

"He has shown himself incompetent strategically, operationally and tactically, and is far more than anyone responsible for what has happened to our important mission in Iraq. ... Mr. Rumsfeld must step down."

— *Retired Army Maj. Gen. Paul Eaton*

### **III. WAR IN IRAQ HAS DIVERTED RESOURCES AND ATTENTION FROM OTHER FRONTS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GLOBAL TERRORIST NETWORKS.**

The killing of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi was a major success for U.S. troops, but it is not likely to diminish Iraq's insurgency. Iraqis make up 90 percent of Iraq's insurgency, unlike foreign fighters like Zarqawi, and a primary motivation for Iraq's insurgency is the U.S. troop presence. Even after the Samarra shrine attack in February threatened to push Iraq into all-out sectarian civil war, the vast majority of attacks still target U.S. forces.

Outside of Iraq, the Bush administration has failed to present a realistic strategy for countering the threat posed by the global terror networks. In a recent survey of more than 100 of America's leading foreign policy experts conducted by *Foreign Policy* magazine and the Center for American Progress, eight in 10 (84 percent) do not think that the United States is winning the war on terror. The War in Iraq has not helped America win the broader fight against global terrorists. Instead:

- ? By invading Iraq without a realistic plan to stabilize the country, the Bush administration created a new terrorist haven where none had previously existed.
- ? By maintaining an open-ended military presence in Iraq, the Bush administration is presenting U.S. terrorist enemies with a recruitment tool and rallying cry for organizing attacks against the U.S. and its allies.
- ? According to the National Counter-Terrorism Center, the number of large-scale terrorist attacks in Iraq increased by over 100 between 2004 and 2005, with a total 8,299 civilians killed in 2005.
- ? Osama bin Laden remains at large and Al Qaeda offshoots proliferate.
- ? By diverting resources and attention from Afghanistan to an unnecessary war of choice in Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration has left Afghanistan exposed to a resurgence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The United States needs to complete the mission in Afghanistan and cannot do it with so many troops bogged down in Iraq.
- ? By focusing so many U.S. resources on Iraq, the Bush administration has taken its eye off the ball in places like Somalia, which was overrun by Islamist militias tied to Al Qaeda last week.

**IV. THE WAR IN IRAQ HAS INCREASED THE BURDEN ON U.S. TAXPAYERS WITHOUT STABILIZING IRAQ OR MAKING AMERICANS SAFER.**

Over the last three years, the United States has spent more than \$300 billion in Iraq, yet the investment has failed to stabilize Iraq or improve the overall quality of life for most Iraqis. According to the Congressional Research Service, total assistance to Iraq thus far is roughly equivalent to total assistance, adjusted for inflation, provided to Germany — and almost double that provided to Japan from 1946 to 1952. Yet on key metrics like oil production, Iraq has failed to advance beyond pre-war levels, and quality of life indicators remain dismal:

- Oil production is below pre-war levels (2.6 million barrels per day in 2003 vs. 2.1 million barrels per day in May 2006);
- The majority of water sector projects and health care clinics planned in 2003 remain not completed, despite spending hundreds of millions of dollars;
- One in three Iraqi children is malnourished and underweight, according to the United Nations Children's Fund.

Rather than a record of progress and achievement, the Bush administration's record is one of corruption and waste:

- \$8.8 billion given to Iraqi ministries by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) remains unaccounted for, according to the Congressional Research Service;
- Iraqi Defense Ministry officials spent \$1 billion on questionable arms purchases;
- The Interior Ministry has at least 1,100 ghost employees, costing \$1.3 million a month.

In short, we have no strategy, no support from allies or friends in the region, a nascent civil war in the country we are supposed to be helping, an

overstretched military, a misdirected counterterrorism effort, and a massive diversion of funds in support of a failed effort.

## **V. MULTIPLE DEPLOYMENTS HURT MORALE AND FAMILIES**

### **Multiple Deployments Taking Toll on Military Families, Answers Questions of How to Help Families of Deployed Service Members**

Military families need greater psychological, emotional, and organizational assistance according to the results of a new survey released March 28 of this year by the National Military Family Association (NMFA).

The study, "Cycles of Deployment Report," which focused on the needs of military families, shows service members and military families are experiencing increased levels of anxiety, fatigue, and stress. In response, NMFA outlined recommendations for meeting these challenges amid multiple and extended deployments, increased rates at which servicemembers are called upon for service, and the heavy reliance on National Guard and Reserve forces.

This report clearly shows the range of support programs for families has expanded since the start of the War on Terror. However, multiple deployments and a high operations tempo mean different types of support are needed for families' continued success before, during, and after

deployment. The survey results provide the Department of Defense a detailed roadmap for making sure families are taken care of during this important time.

Key findings from this study about the impact of deployment includes:

- ? Almost half of respondents reported they have used or would use counseling services such as anger management classes and family counseling. Three quarters of those who stated they were better able to deal with subsequent deployments found counseling services to be helpful.
- ? Two-thirds of military families surveyed did not have contact with their unit or unit network volunteer during the critical pre-deployment stage.
- ? Less than one-half reported a consistent level of family support through the pre-deployment, deployment, and post- deployment phases. Seventeen percent reported no support was available.
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- ? Many respondents are concerned that volunteers who help families adjust to life during deployment and what to expect after the reunion are becoming fatigued and subject to "burn- out." They stated that the leaders of unit family groups should be paid or have paid professional support personnel assigned.
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- ? Military family members with civilian jobs face pressure to avoid taking time off before, during, or after deployment. Sixty percent of military spouses are employed outside the home and many have either quit their jobs or are considering it.
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- ? Military families are worried about how the reunion will go with their deployed family member even as they are worrying about their servicemember's safety in the field. Unfortunately, many families are not taking advantage of specific return and reunion briefings and activities.
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- ? Many respondents expressed that when entering a second or third deployment, they carry unresolved anxieties and expectations from the last deployment(s). While they may have gained knowledge of resources

available to them, respondents whose servicemember deployed multiple times reported being more fatigued and increasingly concerned about their family relationships.

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- ? Although challenged by the demands of deployment, families noted they are proud of their servicemember and their service to our country. They understand that family support is primarily their personal responsibility, but they expect "The Military" to provide support as well.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEAL WITH STRESS OF MULTIPLE DEPLOYMENTS**

The National Military Families Association has developed a series of recommendations for how the Department of Defense (DoD) can better train and support military staff and civilian volunteers to assist military families, including:

- ? Expand program and information outreach. Create formats for families to access support services and maintain touch with their commands and unit family group that live too far from either the unit or from other military families.
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- ? Assist families in developing realistic expectations, and then meet them. Educate military families about what to expect before, during, and after deployments.
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- ? Direct more resources to support family volunteers. Increase the level of resources and paid professionals, both counselors and administrative, to support the logistics of family support and conducting family readiness activities.
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- ? Address return and reunion challenges throughout the deployment cycle. Help with the reintegration of a servicemember with the family after deployment.
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- ? Recognize that family time is important. Encourage service leaders to give family time a higher priority when planning operational activities, especially for servicemembers who have only been back from deployment for a few months.



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? Continue deployment briefings throughout the year. Never assume families have all the information they need. Ongoing deployment briefings can especially help new spouses or the parents of new recruits. Experienced family members also may find new challenges during a subsequent deployment or find the accumulated stress from multiple deployments creates the need for re-engagement with the family readiness/support group or for accessing different support personnel.

## **VII. IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENT OF NATIONAL GUARD**

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the large and extended deployment of National Guard units overseas has undermined the ability of the United States to deal with terrorist attacks or natural disasters. *For example, state officials in Louisiana and Mississippi struggled to overcome the absence of National Guard members from their states in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.* In Louisiana, about 100 of the National Guard's high-water vehicles remain abroad — even as the state continues to rebuild from Hurricane Katrina. Coastal North Carolina is missing nearly half its Humvee fleet, and Guard officials there say shortages have forced the state to pool equipment from different units into one pot of hurricane supplies.

In addition, the equipment the Guard needs to help in the aftermath of natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina is in shorter supply because the gear is in use in combat zones, is battle-damaged, or has been loaned to cover gaps in other units.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Speaker, our troops in Iraq have never faltered and they have never failed. They were never defeated in battle. They won the war they were sent to fight. They completed their mission. They performed magnificently.

They have earned the right to return home and be reunited with their families and loved ones. Now is not the time for us in Congress to falter or fail. Now is the time to embrace a plan for our troops in Iraq that offers a chance of success. We need a plan that will work. There is only one such plan. It is the Murtha Plan I support. I yield back.