

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER

*Full Committee Hearing on U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Southern Command
and U.S. Joint Forces Command*

Today, the committee begins its review of the state of our combatant commands. Our nine “Unified Combatant Commands” is “where the rubber meets the road” as they are charged with the responsibility for military operations in every region of the world and across the entire spectrum of conflict.

This morning, we will receive testimony on the posture of three of these commands – Special Operations Command, Southern Command and Joint Forces Command. This afternoon, we will continue with Pacific Command and US Forces Korea and tomorrow we will focus on Northern Command and Strategic Command.

The combatant commanders who appear before us today face a wide range of changes and challenges. Last April, major changes were made to the Unified Command Plan, altering the missions and geographic responsibilities of many of our Combatant Commands. At the same time, the volatile political-military situation in the world provides urgent challenges in the areas of responsibility under the purview of each of the combatant commanders before us today.

As we heard during the testimony of the Secretary of Defense last month, this year’s defense authorization request provides U.S. Special Operations Command expanded authority and an expanded budget to fight the Global War on Terrorism. General Holland, your forces have been on the forefront of the war on terrorism, and will be again should there be a conflict with Iraq. I look forward to hearing from you on your plans to use these increased resources to further SOCOM’s mission.

In Southern Command, Colombia continues to be a major source of concern. The recent crash of an aircraft carrying Department of Defense contractors that resulted in the death of one American, one Colombian and the capture of three other Americans by FARC rebels remains of the utmost concern. I look forward to hearing from General Hill on our efforts to rescue those individuals as well as our on-going efforts in support of “Plan Colombia.”

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Finally, the changes to the Unified Command Plan last year continued the process of refining the mission of Joint Forces Command. With the transfer of its geographical responsibilities to other Unified Commands, JFCOM is now focused solely on transformation, joint experimentation and joint doctrine. Admiral Giambastiani, I look forward to your views on how these changes have affected your ability to accomplish your mission.

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