Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 15, 2005

The Honorable Duncan Hunter
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hunter:

We write to request that the House Armed Services Committee hold hearings to discuss an end to the war in Iraq and how to start bringing the men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces home.

Since the Iraq war began in March 2003, nearly 2,000 American soldiers have been killed, an estimated 14,000 American soldiers have been wounded, nearly 200 coalition soldiers have been killed, an estimated 252 contractors have been killed, 48 journalists have been killed, and an estimated 23,000-26,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed. Since March 2003, the U.S. Congress has appropriated $207.5 billion on the war in Iraq.

During this time, the Armed Services Committee has met on many occasions to discuss progress of U.S. military operations in Iraq, the security situation in Iraq, and the strength of the insurgency in Iraq. However, the Armed Services Committee has not held a single hearing to assess how to end the war and bring our troops home, or what standards must be met before the U.S. can end the war. In our view, the Armed Services Committee has failed to provide adequate oversight by seemingly ignoring this vital public discussion and failing to hold a single hearing in this regard.

In contrast, in recent days high-ranking American and Iraqi officials have begun publicly discussing the possibility of withdrawing U.S. military forces from Iraq. Gen. George Casey, the American military commander in Iraq, has stated that within a year the U.S. could withdraw a substantial percentage of its 135,000 troops if the political and security situation improves. Interim Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari also stated that the time has come for the U.S. to establish and implement a coordinated transition from American to Iraqi military control throughout Iraq. Finally, over 100 members of the Iraqi parliament have recently urged the U.S. to fully withdraw its military forces from Iraq.

We are not advocating a specific strategy for ending the war. The point of hearings is to explore all available options in this regard. Nor are we advocating a cut-and-run strategy in Iraq, because we believe the U.S. has a moral responsibility to help the Iraqi people.

But we must do this not through our military, but through internationally-coordinated efforts to rebuild Iraq's economic and humanitarian infrastructure.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Lynn C. Woolsey

Barbara Lee

Tammy Baldwin

Jim McDermott

Gwen Moore

Raúl M. Grijalva

Dennis J. Kucinich

Michael M. Honda

Sam Farr

Pete Stark

John Lewis

Jim Oberstar

Bob Filner

Jan Schakowsky

Eliot L. Engel

Jim McGovern