

[H.A.S.C. No. 109-93]

**YOUR TROOPS: THEIR STORIES**

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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HEARING HELD  
NOVEMBER 3, 2005



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U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

32-992

WASHINGTON : 2008

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ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

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## YOUR TROOPS: THEIR STORIES

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,

*Washington, DC, Thursday, November 3, 2005.*

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 8:36 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Duncan Hunter (chairman of the committee) presiding.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DUNCAN HUNTER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. This morning, the committee will receive testimony from three distinguished members of our armed forces who participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

And I would like to welcome Brigadier General John F. Kelly, United States Marine Corps, Legislative Assistant to the Commandant.

General Kelly, thank you for being with us.

Colonel Robert Abrams, United States Army, Chief of Staff, 1st Cavalry Division.

Thank you, Colonel, for being with us today.

And Command Sergeant Neil Citola, United States Army, Command Sergeant Major, III Corps.

General Kelly served as Former Assistant Division Commander of the 1st Marine Division, which was deployed to the Al Anbar Province. Colonel Abrams and Command Sergeant Major Citola both served with the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad.

I thought it might be interesting, we cover a broad range of issues in this committee, because our jurisdiction is very broad. It goes to the full reach of national security and the armed services, and we had yesterday, for example, a hearing on our acquisition system, which is very important to the future of our defense posture.

But sometimes it is important to talk not about programs and schedules and weapons but to talk about people, the men and women who serve in the uniformed services of our country, and extend and project American power around the world and especially in the war-fighting theaters that we are presently focused on: Iraq and Afghanistan.

But along with extending this power and fighting for our country on the battlefield, they also are great ambassadors for our country. And one reason after any conflict and often during conflicts people can't wait to get to the United States from whatever theater we happen to be engaged in, that is a result of the fact that they get

to know Americans and they understand after a while that Americans are darn good people, and they want to come be with us. That is largely a result of the contact that they have with the men and women of our uniformed services.

Our folks have done extraordinary things, and I have reviewed a number of the citations for valor that have been issued as a result of battlefield activities, and I think it is time for our country to know really more about the people side of this current conflict that is taking place in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So thank you for being with us today, gentlemen. We appreciate your appearance and we look forward to hearing about your own firsthand experiences on the ground in Iraq.

Many of us here have visited Iraq. We have been honored to speak to the folks that are serving there. In fact, around the perimeter of this room, you can see photographs that chronicle our Armed Services Committee members meeting with the troops during these trips.

And I am proud of our members. Everybody on our committee has been over into the war-fighting theaters, many of them multiple times. Mr. Reyes, for example, has been to Iraq and Afghanistan I believe in excess of nine visits.

How many, Silvestre?

Mr. REYES. Five to Iraq and five to Afghanistan.

The CHAIRMAN. Five to Iraq and five to Afghanistan. And I think that reflects the great dedication that our members have to the folks that wear the uniform.

There has been a lot of progress in Iraq. Within the last several weeks we are all familiar with the election, the national referendum to adopt a new constitution. We are also familiar with the fact that the Iraqi security forces continue to grow. And for people who want an exit strategy, the exit strategy is the standup of the Iraqi military to the point where they can protect their government from the insurgency.

Currently, there are 206,500 Iraqi security forces who have been trained and equipped, including 99,000 Ministry of Defense forces and 107,000 in the Ministry of Interior forces. The control key cities, such as Najaf, formerly a real hotspot for our troops where we battled last year, and in addition, they control key districts in Baghdad, such as Sadr City, and have taken control of about 87 square miles of Baghdad.

American and coalition forces serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom have been instrumental in the progress that we see today. They have helped to ensure the safety of polling places as well as rebuilding numerous schools. They have deterred suicide bombings, they have helped to complete critical water and sewage projects, they have apprehended terrorists, uncovered and ceased massive weapons caches, improved and built health facilities.

And, clearly, the efforts of our troops have gone a long way toward securing and rebuilding a country that was destroyed by a dictator. But we don't always hear that story inside the Beltway, but the American people need to hear it. They can't possibly understand the whole picture in Iraq without the perspective of the soldiers serving there.

And, gentlemen, that is why we have asked you to be here today to describe your experiences and help us build a complete picture of the situation. And, also, I would like to hear you talk a little bit about individual soldiers and marines and their activities and their efforts on behalf of our nation. So thanks for being with us today. We appreciate it.

And before we go further, I would like to yield to my partner on this committee, the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Skelton, for any remarks he would like to make.

**STATEMENT OF HON. IKE SKELTON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. This proves to be an excellent hearing. I ask that my prepared statement be put in the record in its entirety.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Skelton can be found in the Appendix on page 47.]

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

And, incidentally, Mr. Skelton and I want you to know, right now, as we have this hearing, we have about a dozen other activities scheduled for Republicans and Democrats in this Capitol, so people will come and go, but you understand that, and don't let it bother you.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you. This is an excellent opportunity for us as well as the American people to understand what conflict is like.

Of course, we have all been to Iraq, to Afghanistan, and I remember very well, General Kelly, visiting with you in the shadows of Babylon for my very first trip to Iraq and the excellent briefing you gave us in that outdoor court, on that hot day. And we thank you for being with us.

Command Sergeant Major Citola, thank you for your service and for being with us. We look forward to your comments.

It is a special treat to welcome, Mr. Chairman, Colonel Bruce Abrams, a member of one of the most outstanding military families our country has produced, the famous Abrams family. And you are following in your father's and two brother's footsteps, so we thank you for joining us today.

We look forward to the stories that you have to tell us, the sacrifices. It appears, in many respects, the only ones that are really sacrificing in the war in Iraq or the fight against terrorism, which has a genesis in Afghanistan, are those in uniform and their families, and we look forward to hearing you.

While you share these stories, gentlemen, I hope you can give an insight as to what Congress can do to better help in the war effort. Was your pre-deployment training adequate? Did you have the equipment that you needed? Did you have all the Marines and all the soldiers you need in the right ranks and the right skills? What problems did your families face when you came home? All of these questions will be quite helpful to this committee if you would furnish the answers along with telling us what the real challenges are on the battlefield.

So, Mr. Chairman, we welcome and thank them for being with us.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I thank the gentleman.

And why don't we start with General Kelly. And, General Kelly, we titled this hearing, "Your Army and Your Marines." Tell us about our Marines.

**STATEMENT OF BRIG. GEN. JOHN F. KELLY, LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE COMMANDANT, U.S. MARINE CORPS**

General KELLY. Sir, a pleasure to be here, certainly, and a good morning to you and Mr. Skelton and the other distinguished members of the committee. As I say, an honor to be here. Nothing I like more than talking about great Marines and great sailors who are putting their lives on the line as we speak.

Just to frame my own experiences, I deployed almost 3 years ago to Iraq, actually to Kuwait, and for the next 2 or 3 months sat just below the border between Iraq and Kuwait as we continued to build up and waited for our political masses to decide what we were going to do, and, ultimately, of course, we crossed the line of departure on the 20th of March in 2003.

Fighting with us that day on our move toward Baghdad was the 1st U.K. Division on our right and the magnificent 3rd Infantry Division on our left. About 3 weeks later, we found ourselves in Baghdad after a relatively, I wouldn't say easy time, but a relatively casualty-free period on the way up to Baghdad, and, literally, on less than 24 hours notice, we pushed on—the 1st Marine Division, that is, pushed on up to a place called Tikrit, about another 140 miles, and then further again to a place called Bayji, about 40 miles beyond that.

At that point in time, we were about 650 miles from the Persian Gulf, and, as you would imagine, soldiers of the sea that Marines are, we were pretty nervous being that far away from the ocean. But 650 road miles in just over 3 weeks.

The fall of Baghdad and as peace began to—certainly, we went into a lull period. We were moved south, that is, the 1st Marine Division moved south of Baghdad, and we assumed the area of operation around Karbala, Najaf, Iskandariyah, northern Babil province, Babylon and Hillah and stayed there until October when we went home after turning the whole region over to the 1st Polish Division, made up of a number of our allies.

In any event, I went back in—got home in October, went back in on a couple of site surveys a couple weeks at a time and then permanently back in in February where we began the process of turning over the Al Anbar province from the 82nd Airborne Division and General Chuck Swannack, the Commanding General.

We continued the buildup and the turnover on the second iteration until we actually took the area of responsibility (AOR), and this AOR includes where we are today, Al Anbar, Fallujah, Ramadi, Husaybah, Al Qaim, places like that; they are in the news every day. We took over toward the end of March in 2004 and I remained there until August, about a year ago, when I came out.

In all of my experiences, both tours, and all of the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks I either observed or came up immediately after they happened, all the gun fights I observed, I never



once saw one of these young Americans—and many of these young Americans include soldiers that were working with us—I never saw one of them hesitate. Did not matter how much fire was applied, they went into their immediate action drills and did exactly what they were expected to do and exactly what they are trained to do.

But unless you have been there, as you well know, Mr. Chairman, unless you have been there, the last thing you want to do when that kind of fire, when any kind of fire is coming at you, that kind of danger that you can't imagine unless you have experienced it, the last thing you want to do is get up and move, but they do. And it never ceases to amaze me, never ceased to amaze me that I never saw one single soldier, sailor or Marine hesitate, and I don't add airmen to that, because I, in our particular zone, never saw them.

Who are they? They are regular people, regular guys and gals. Average age is about 19 or 20 years old. They only make about \$13,000 a year. They come, generally, from the working class of our nation. I can talk only for Marines here when I say that they are generally looking for adventure, to get out of whatever they are involved in back home and just get out there and see a little bit of the world. After 9/11, they are certainly looking to pay back the people that did that to us.

They are more than willing to answer the Nation's call in this time of war. We Marines promised them very little other than a hard time and some great training. And their parents today in the recruiting field, their parents always ask, "Will my son, will my daughter, if he or she enlists in the Marines, will they have to go to Iraq," and the answer is, "Yes." And they are shocked when they get the answer because we say, "We can definitely guarantee in their tour they will go to Iraq." And they still come.

This is not their war; it is America's war. Every one of them is trained—our Marines, every one of them is trained as a riflemen and that pays off. Every one of our officers, regardless of Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), is trained as an infantry platoon commander.

Just in closing, sir, these are ordinary people. Those of us in uniform are generally just ordinary people. We just do extraordinary things. As of right now, in the last 24 hours in Iraq, there has been 104 attacks against our forces of various sizes, various types. Only 95 produced any casualties. In the last 24 hours, 2 Marines have died and 8 have been seriously wounded and Medivac'ed.

As I speak today, we have just under 500 dead Marines from hostile fire in Iraq and over 4,500 injured. It is a great tribute to the medical care that we have put in place over there that 65 percent of those that are wounded return to duty within—are not Medivac'ed out, are not considered serious, remain in country, where they all want to stay, and return to the fight.

Thank you for your time, sir, and attention.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, General Kelly.

Colonel Abrams, thank you, sir, for being with us today.

**STATEMENT OF COL. ROBERT ABRAMS, CHIEF OF STAFF, 1ST  
CAVALRY DIVISION, U.S. ARMY**

Colonel ABRAMS. Sir, thank you. And good morning, Mr. Chairman, distinguished members. And I want to thank all of you and the committee for your continued and steadfast support of our soldiers serving in uniform. And thanks for the opportunity to be here today to share with you some good news story from our Iraqi theater of operation experience.

As stated, I am Colonel Abrams. I am currently assigned as the chief of staff of the 1st Cavalry Division. I previously had the privilege to command the 1st Brigade Combat Team from June of 2003 to July of this year when I became the chief.

I prepared to deploy the brigade combat team of nearly 3,500 soldiers as part of the 1st Cavalry Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) from March of 2004 to March of this year. And as many of you recall, the 1st Cavalry Division was the headquarters for Task Force Baghdad, which encompassed all of the capital city and the surrounding Baghdad province.

My particular brigade's area of operation included two of the nine districts in Baghdad, on the east side of the Tigris River, Sadr City and its lesser known but equally important district to its southeast, Nine Nissan. The area encompassed a little over 160 square kilometers and had 3.5 million Iraqi residents.

The area is predominantly Shi'ia Iraqis that for over 35 years of Saddam Hussein's regime were part of the have-nots. That part of the city's infrastructure and essential services were left to deteriorate for those 35 years while the population had grown by 8 times over, making a bad situation that much worse.

The first national elections, on 30 January of 2005, that both Command Sergeant Major Citola and I were there for, was the highlight of our deployment. And I can tell you that to a person in the brigade and certainly in the division, seeing the citizens of our area show up in such large numbers confirmed for all of us the tremendous determination that a people can have when given the hope of democracy and a better future. We had over 1 million voters alone voted in our sector, spread across 385 polling stations without incident.

Sir, you mentioned in your opening remarks with regards to the Iraqi security forces, and while deployed I had two Iraqi army battalions under my tactical control that I was responsible for training and employment. Those two battalions were formed in March of 2004, about the same time that I arrived in country, and I took them over from the 1st Armored Division.

Over the course of a year of training that was led by 60-to 70-man teams of embedded trainers from my brigade combat team, those 2 units made incredible strides in their combat capability. They went from platoon to company, to battalion, independent level combat operations, all the while participating in our combined combat operations for the entire year. They served side by side with our soldiers on a daily basis.

One of these battalions was the first Iraq army battalion to gain certification for independent operations and was given sole responsibility of a portion of my area. And later, right before we transitioned with the 3rd Infantry Division, they were the basis for

the 40th Army Brigade of the Iraqi army brigade that took over part of Baghdad in February of this year.

Sir, during our deployment, my brigade combat executed over \$80 million in projects to improve essential services and the well being in both districts. And we oversaw an additional \$300 million in other large-scale infrastructure projects that had been coordinated by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We supervised sewer, electric and water projects for Sadr City and Nine Nissan, to include conducting bidding conferences and coordinating all efforts with our city managers.

Our cleanup program alone dramatically improved the appearance of the area, decreased the opportunity for improved explosive devices on the roads and most of all employed 15,000 Iraqi citizens on a daily basis.

I cannot describe adequately the scene in Sadr City, sector 11, on 12 December, 2004, when fresh water began flowing from the brand new water network, servicing about 100,000 people for the first time in that city ever. The rejoicing that day was only eclipsed by the joy of election day.

Sir, throughout our entire tour, leaders at every level in the brigade worked side by side with neighborhood and district councils as well as tribal and religious leaders to discuss everything. The point being here that open dialogue with informal and tribal leaders as well as our appointed officials was critical to our ability to execute our campaign and remain connected with the real pulse and atmospherics of the people.

The Iraqi men and women in my area were incredibly thankful to be rid of Saddam Hussein and extremely thankful for what we were doing for their people. We may not have always agreed on how we were doing certain things, but our presence was certainly always wanted.

Sir, one note on combat operations. Unlike other areas in Baghdad, my primary enemy for the 12-month tour was the militia loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr. We had 2 separate and distinct periods of over 60 days where we conducted full-scale, high-intensity combat operations in and around 2.5 million people that live in Sadr City, which is a 5-by-7 rectangular-shaped suburb of Baghdad.

We leveraged every asset available to apply lethal fires with incredible precision, while at the same time minimizing risk of collateral damage and injury to innocent civilians. In the end, the militia was exhausted and became so careless in their own attacks that they injured more civilians than they could ever hope to do to our soldiers. We defeated the militia and forced them to no choice but to turn in their weapons and stop hostile actions.

Sir, Sadr City went from the most contentious, most active sector in all of Iraq to the quietest during the 12 months our soldiers served there. And I am very happy and proud, as you mentioned in your remarks, that it has been turned over to the Iraqi army brigade.

Sir, with that much direct high-intensity combat comes casualties, and I am forever grateful that I served with such remarkable and brave Americans and their families. And their sacrifices will never be forgotten, and we will always be in their debt.

But I do need to let you know that while we sustained nearly twice the number of wounded in action as the next closest brigade combat team in the division, what is more remarkable is that during the same period, the 1st Brigade Combat Team re-enlisted more soldiers than any other brigade-sized unit in the Army—an indicator of the tremendous pride that our soldiers take in securing an extremely contentious sector and making it a better place.

Sir, security in the region comes not just from the application of traditional military force but from sustained application of resources across a wide spectrum of activities. And, furthermore, security comes from soldiers who treat Iraqis with dignity and respect, who act in a professional manner whenever they interact with the populous. These soldiers, our soldiers, are our best ambassadors as they earn the trust and confidence of the Iraqi people, one Iraqi family at a time.

Our soldiers remain proud and wholly committed to our mission of rebuilding Iraq, continue to conduct themselves in a manner that should make our nation very proud of their efforts.

Sir, I thank you again for the opportunity to be here and for your continued support of our men and women in uniform. Sir, that concludes my formal statement, and I look forward to answering anyone's questions. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Colonel Abrams.

Command Sergeant Major Citola, thank you for being with us today.

**STATEMENT OF COMMAND SGT. MAJ. NEIL CITOLA, COMMAND SGT. MAJ., III CORPS**

Major CITOLA. Good morning, sir.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members, ladies and gentlemen, sir, I have got to tell you, before I start reading this, I am honored to be here, but, in particular, I am honored to be a member of the armed forces of the United States.

And that is just not my opinion. I am constantly humbled by the perception and the sense of duty that exists across the entire spectrum of the entire armed forces of the United States. And I am not just talking about the American Army but I mean our Marine battle buddies as well.

Over the last four and a half years, I have had the privilege of serving as the command sergeant major of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team and then ultimately the 1st Cavalry Division. On Monday morning, the 7th of November, 2005, I will farewell this great division to assume my duties as the 3rd Armor Corps in Fort Hood, command sergeant major.

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team consisted of 3,200 officers and soldiers from across all components of the Army: Active, Reserve, National Guard and United States Air Force. The brigade formed a vanguard for the remainder of the 1st Cavalry, and, as such, initially fell under the operational control of the 1st Armored Division, from late January 2004 to the first week of April of the same year.

Our area of operations included all of Baghdad on the west side of the Tigris River, with the river forming our eastern boundary. The brigade was tasked with executing five lines of operations, con-

sisting of infrastructure revitalization, governance, security forces training, combat operations designed to defeat, neutralize or capture those supporting or engaged in insurgency operations.

In preparation for our responsibilities, the Brigade Combat Team (BCT) engaged in an aggressive training program covering the entire spectrum of stability and support operations and low to high-intensity conflict.

Sir, could we have trained more? Yes. But could we have gone to any greater degree of focus insomuch as our final preparations were concerned in preparing ultimately for our deployment? I don't think the answer would be yes. I think our leaders, sir, did everything that was humanly and materially possible to prepare us for combat operations. And my hat is off to them.

We initiated our training program with a short notice deployment to the National Training Center where we were informed of our future deployment to Iraq, and we continued our training up to Thanksgiving of 2003. Families being a critical component of all the armed forces, not just the Army, the brigade combat team ceased large-scale training in order to permit our soldiers the opportunity to spend as much time with their loved ones over the holidays prior to deployment.

From the onset of our preparations for and ultimate commitment to the Iraq theater, I marveled at the ability, resiliency, character, determination, resolve and discipline of our soldiers.

Being a senior non-commissioned officer of my unit, I am charged with, among other things, good order and discipline and passing on the heraldry and traditions of the same. To that end, I have devoted myself to being a student of history. As such, I have come to find that the soldiers that comprise our ranks today are every bit as devoted and far more capable than those who have served before us.

This statement is not intended to detract from the history of sacrifice our military is renowned for; quite the contrary. The American army is an evolutionary institution that today reaps a windfall in the form of our nation's youth who possess a level of individual capability and mental dexterity that continues to surpass each generation that served before it, sir.

As the command sergeant major of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, the 1st Cavalry Division and ultimately Task Force Baghdad, I served, worked and fought alongside the combat, combat support and combat service support soldiers, the finest Army our nation has ever yet fielded.

I have turned wrenches, prepared and served meals, pumped fuel, filled sandbags, swung hammers, swung chains, trained and pulled triggers with the soldiers of the 1st Cav. I have come to realize that the American soldier, regardless of his or her military occupational specialty, will do whatever is necessary when properly led, sir. Motivated and cared for in a fashion that they do truly deserve.

Don't mistake my comments. We did not and we do not coddle our youth. We set the conditions when deployed and challenge our soldiers each and every day. It is harder to be a successful soldier today than 29 years ago when I first entered the ranks, but we reap the rewards of the same every day.

During my 15 months in Baghdad, I watched as our officers and soldiers, airmen and Marines worked in neighborhood and district advisory councils. At the same time, I have got to be honest with you, sir, I was schooled in the democratic process myself. I watched as soldiers rolled up their sleeves and repaired and resupplied schools for the youth of our country.

Sir, all I have ever wanted to be is an American soldier, and I realized that in 1967 when I was in my father's Buick LeSabre and we were traveling down the Garden State Parkway. In 1967, there was a lot of people that were heading off to Vietnam, and back in 1967 there wasn't a seatbelt law and we youngsters could bounce up and down in the front seat. And, sir, I waved to those soldiers that were in front of me. And you know what a soldier always does, sir, when a kid waves and smiles; they wave back. And I was hooked. They had me hooked from go.

And, sir, that is what compels our soldiers today. They live to help the young. They live to help the old. They love to build things. It is easy to cut the grass, but they love to make the grass grow. They can build anything just as quickly or just as well, rather, as they can destroy it.

I was witness to our soldiers working alongside Iraqi national contractors repairing sewage treatment systems or establishing them in areas where none previously existed. I watched and learned as our guard and reserve soldiers employed their civilian skills in training the Iraqi security forces.

I watched and learned as our engineer officers, non-commissioned officers, be they civil and combat, active, guard and reserve, stood up governance support teams, mentoring elected and appointed Iraqi nationals in the ways and means of running, staffing and maintaining an urban center. I watched as our commanders mentored local leaders and contractors and developed the infrastructure necessary to delivery fresh potable water to portions of Baghdad that never had it, sir.

I was witness to agricultural initiatives that repaired and revitalized irrigation systems and delivered thousands of tons of needed seed and fertilizer.

Sir, ladies and gentlemen, I have no doubt that Iraq can, and one day will, be the agricultural heartland of the Middle East.

Insomuch as our operations in Iraq are concerned, I can tell you unequivocally we left Baghdad, and for that matter Iraq, in a better posture than when we first arrived. This is not meant to imply that those who worked and fought before us did not do a superb job. On the contrary, the 3rd Infantry Division and 1st Armored Division and 1st Marine Division set the conditions that enabled our success.

Today, while fighting still continues in Iraq, the country continues its march toward democracy regardless of what you may read in the press, sir. What form of democracy achieved in Iraq may vary greatly from what we enjoy here at home, but I have no doubt that our continued engagement with the Iraqi people will ultimately—or excuse me, through our continued engagement, the Iraqi people will ultimately enjoy a far greater degree of self-determination than the have ever known in their 3,200 year history, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Command Sergeant Major Citola, thank you for a very vigorous statement. Appreciate it.

And, gentlemen, thanks for telling us a little bit about your personal involvement in the initial operations and the program to rebuild Iraq.

Let me, and just go left to right here, ask you about something that came up during your testimony.

You mentioned—I think Colonel Abrams mentioned that the units which are fighting that have been involved in some of the toughest fighting seem to have among the best re-enlistment rates, which would seem to be contrary to the general perception that the war is scaring off soldiers and would-be soldiers from enlisting and would-be Marines from enlisting in the uniformed services.

Kind of interesting that the people that have been in the toughest fighting are interested in re-enlisting, because there is a lot of talk today from various pundits who project the breaking of our armed forces because of the operating tempo (OPTEMPO) and the veracity of some of the operations.

So, General Kelly, why don't you tell us a little bit about the Marine units and if you have got any statistics, any figures on re-enlistments? How do re-enlistments go in terms of the people that are in country that are carrying the brunt of the war?

General KELLY. Yes, sir. Perhaps if I could start with enlistments. It has been very, very difficult this year to maintain the numbers that we need to maintain. When I say very difficult, we have maintained them, it just takes a lot more time.

Kind of a statistic to throw at you, the average recruiter 2 or 3 years ago spent about 4 hours per recruit. Usually, most of that time spent with the recruit, a little bit of time with the family. Generally speaking, today, it is about 15 hours. Most of the additional time spent with the family. As I mentioned before in my opening, the question always is, "Will he or she have to go to Iraq," and, again, the honest answer has got to be, "Absolutely."

There are three types of Marines in the world today: Those in Iraq, those that just got back and those that are looking forward to going.

But your specific about re-enlistments, like what the Sergeant Major said, I mean, we have had the most successful year perhaps, in re-enlistments that we have had in a long, long time. We try to match up what we need and try to re-enlist those with the right MOS and skill level or skill sets. We have had nothing but success. It has not in any way, shape or form impacted on our re-enlistment rates.

So as I said, we shipped 104 percent this year into the boot camps. It has been a tough year, and we have re-enlisted everyone we have wanted to and turned many, many great Marines back. So these guys and gals are in it for the fight. That is where they want to be, and that is what they want to do.

And, oh, by the way, the highest re-enlistment rates were among married Marines, all of whom know they are going back to Iraq.

The CHAIRMAN. Colonel Abrams.

Colonel ABRAMS. Sir, I would add to that a standing kind of rule in the Army, for us anyway, is for re-enlistment you enlist soldiers but you re-enlist families. And I echo what General Kelly said: A

large portion of our force is married, well over 60 percent. That is a record.

And the reason why they re-enlist, sir, is, one, they know that their families are going to be well cared for back at home, there is great family readiness groups that support them, we support our extended families, those that don't live in the area, single soldiers' parents that stretch across the nation. We have got some very creative people, we have got strong attachments that help take care of our families.

So our soldiers know that while they are deployed, while they are forward they don't have to worry about what is going on at home. We have got a chain of command back there and plenty of volunteers to help keep everything heading in the right direction so soldiers can remain focused.

Now, soldiers in the heaviest fighting. Why is that? Sir, as you know, it is well documented, there is a bond amongst warriors who have been through the worst of the worst that lasts a lifetime. And our boys saw a lot of tough stuff. That is what keeps them together. They want to continue to serve and be in that unit. They want to stay in that unit as long as they can, and then they want to go off to other units and try to spread that same level of confidence, courage, valor, togetherness, cohesiveness, combat capability. And that is what really drives them.

Sir, just a couple of statistics. While we were in theater for the division, the initial re-enlistment rate for the division was 117 percent of our initial termers, 127 percent of our mid-termers mission and 167 percent of our careerists. Now, keep that in context. While we were in combat, 4,704 soldiers total raised their right hand, swore an oath in combat.

For fiscal year 2005, which is a little more interesting, which included 6 months in combat and then 6 months upon our return, the division just completed out fiscal year 2005 with an overall of 114 percent initial, 128 percent mid-termers and 190 percent in our careerists, for a total average across the force of 130 percent.

It is significant to me, sir, because there is an appropriate financial incentive for soldiers to re-enlist in theater; that is not a secret. But we continued to re-enlist great soldiers and families even after our return when there was no incentive and they know they are going back.

Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. That is an extraordinary statistics, the fact that the people that are in combat are more likely to re-enlist than the others. Quite a commentary on their heart for our country.

Command Sergeant Major.

Major CITOLA. Sir, yes, sir, it is. And I think that is testimony, sir, to the manner in which we are supported. See, we don't want anybody's sympathy. We understand what we got ourselves into, especially after we re-enlist one time. All we want is support.

Sir, we know how much support we garner from our elected officials as soldiers. That is from a sergeant's perspective. We know as soldiers that, by and large, that there is a significant portion of the American population overall that supports us in our effort or the vast majority of Americans, at large, support us and what we stand for.



But, sir, I have got to tell you, and I will speak of retention and ascension, but specifically about recruiting young Americans today. Sir, if I watched what was just on TV, sir, I don't think I would join the armed forces of the United States either. I wouldn't, because, sir, from my perspective, in many cases, it looked like everything is going to hell in a hand basket over there. And I am not trying to go ahead and throw stones at the media.

And I will give you an example just from my perspective. I like putting CNN or Fox News, whatever the case may be, on up in my office. If one vehicle barrier (VB) IED, one car bomb goes off, sir, well, shoot, by the end of that 24-hour day, sir, 48 car bombs have gone off. And, sir, the world is not coming to an end, the sky is not falling.

As the general, the colonel or myself have already articulated, there is more good going on over there than you can shake a stick at, but the only people who have an appreciation for that are, sir, ma'am, ladies and gentlemen, those of you who bother to take the time to cover over there and walk the same dirt as us, or those that bother to go ahead and get an appreciable cross section of we soldiers, contractors, and the other government employees that are over there engaged in the same fight that we are.

So why am I not surprised by our retention rates? Because the soldiers understand the criticality or the seriousness associated with the fight that we are engage in, sir.

Sir, Martin Luther King said once that injustice anywhere is the threat to justice everywhere. Sir, I grew up in this great country and I did stuff wrong. And you know what, sir, my little boy, he is 17, and I know he is doing it wrong too. But he will have to go ahead and account for those things later on, whether it is to his family, countrymen, or to his God, but there are certain liberties and freedoms, sir, that my son, as a birthright of being born in America, that he ought to have. And, sir, if it means that I am consumed in my effort to go ahead and protect those liberties that this country enjoys, then, by golly, I will go ahead and do it.

But if I have got to go ahead and make a mess somewhere—and this isn't just me, sir, I speak for a whole lot of soldiers—I would rather make a mess in somebody else's backyard. But one way or another, sir, there are people out there that, shoot, ain't ever going to get along with us, and I would rather have to go ahead and contend with them somewhere else than do it back home over here.

And, sir, our soldiers have a sense of that. They know what we are attempting to do over there is honorable and it is just. They get a true appreciation for the great leadership that they are associated with. And, sir, as the colonel and the general just mentioned, you become part of a band of brothers that, sir, you would be contented to go ahead and go out every living day with.

So our big success that I think we are finally scratching the surface of, sir, is recognizing earlier on in our preparations as we prepare to redeploy back into the continental United States, our great soldiers, male, female, whatever the case may be, and those youngsters, ages 19 to 25, that are so proud of their service that through the Recruiter Assistance Program we need to do a better job of pushing them out onto the streets with our seasoned recruiters to truly articulate in the minds of America's youth and their mothers

and fathers what reality is and why what we are engaged in is worth the sacrifice. And I think we are on path to do that, sir. I know I ramble.

The CHAIRMAN. Command Sergeant Major, thank you very much. The gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Gentlemen, thank you for your excellent testimony. I have one question for the general and the colonel and one question of the command sergeant major.

As you know, I have been interested in professional military education for quite some time, and I know each of you have been to intermediate and senior war colleges. My question of each of you is, how has professional military education at any and all levels been of help to you in your combat experience?

And, Command Sergeant Major, let me ask you, so you may be thinking about it, should there be more professional military education along the lines of intermediate and senior level for the officers for senior non-commissioned officers?

General Kelly, I will ask you first on the question, has professional military education (PME) helped you.

General KELLY. Sir, the two aspects of PME that I have been involved in was of course the PME, professional military education that the services sent me to, the National War College, the Infantry School at Fort Benning down here at Quantico. Tremendous experiences all. But I have also spent my entire life on a personal PME program, if you will, studying the art and science.

And what has that done for me? I was never once surprised—in my two tours in Iraq, never once surprised ever about anything that happened. Unfortunately, I was also—or, fortunately, also, I think, well positioned as the war kind of got out of the conventional war phase and into the insurgency-counterinsurgency phase. I was able to pick that up, reorganize the forces that I was responsible with, and we started doing the so-called phase four.

But my comment would be, I was never surprised. It was if I had seen the movie before. I don't know if that answers your question.

Mr. SKELTON. Certainly does.

Colonel.

Colonel ABRAMS. Sir, I echo the general's comments. Our Army school system, in fact, I think the joint PME program, but in our experiences in units, it is not teaching us what to think; it is teaching us how to think. And so while maybe the curriculum may not have been exactly tailored for the fight that we have going on in Iraq right now, the combination of our professional military experience at the Army War College, Command and General Staff College, combined with my own personal training and my life experience in the Army, taught me enough how to think.

So when faced with ambiguous situations in Iraq, it was not a matter that I hadn't had enough training.

What I would even echo even more, though, sir, is for junior leaders, because this is a junior leader fight. This is a squad, platoon, section, company at the biggest, except for when you have got really bad things going on. But the day to day it is a platoon fight. And our young officers and junior non-commissioned officers they understand how to think. Our training methodology and our school system for our junior ranks is teaching them enough how to think, so

they are very adaptive, incredibly adaptive and agile on their feet to be able to fight this fight and they are very good at it.

So I would say right now it is adequate.

Mr. SKELTON. We are doing it right, is what each of you are saying.

Colonel ABRAMS. Yes, sir.

Mr. SKELTON. Command Sergeant Major, my question of you.

Major CITOLA. You know, sir, I hear, it is interesting, there are a number of people within the Army, principally, we non-commissioned officer senior types, that are constantly taking advanced non-commissioned officers education system (ANCOES), breaking it apart, putting it back together and so on and so forth.

We question the validity of the point of instruction (POI), programs of instructions, which are being facilitated at both the warrior leader course, or what we knew as primary leadership development course (PLDC), basic non-commissioned officer course (BNCOC), the basic non-commissioned officers course, advanced and then the senior level academies.

I am going to get to your point, sir, but we must never forget that it is what we learned in those schools that brought us where we are now. So, God bless the officer corps because it is commissioned officer corps and it is our elected officials that got us the non-commissioned officer educational program.

Sir, I think we got it about right. That is the short answer. I think that there is much that we can do to the program of instruction, to go ahead and improve the degree of relevancy to the individual soldiers as we prepare them to the ascend into the ranks of junior non-commissioned officer, and I think there are things that we can do to stimulate, and to reinforce what Colonel Abrams just said, how to think, not what to think. And we have got to go ahead and base more of the POI, what we provide to our soldiers, situations where they are forced to go ahead and respond, forced to make decisions and so on.

But the general said this, he said, "A lot of what I encountered it is like I saw it before." And sir, at the National Training Center, joint readiness training center (JRTC), and sir, in the backyards at Fort Hood, Texas, our commanders are doing a great job of that.

Sir, everything I have mentioned here is nothing fundamentally new to the Army. Just a few weeks ago, I was blessed with the opportunity to sit down with Command Sergeant Major Cory McCarty at Fort Leavenworth and the Sergeant Major of the Army, and they are on top of this. Command Sergeant Major John Sparks at training and doctrine command (TRADOC)—and plagiarism is a virtue, and I am just to talking head right now because all these wheels are in motion right now, sir.

We need to keep the Non-Commissioned Officer Educational System, we need to continue to go ahead and, as I said, improve its relevancy. But I will tell you something else, sir, that is just knocking down targets and it is just a force multiplier for the enlisted ranks: You all let us go to collect for free. Sir, we have got smarter soldiers, they are better soldiers, they are more knowledgeable soldiers, they are more capable soldiers.

Sir, there was a time a long time ago when I first became a command sergeant major that I wouldn't have trusted a sergeant or a

staff sergeant to take a group of soldiers from one side of the National Training Center to the other. Heck, sir, today, just to expand on what Colonel Abrams just mentioned, we have got young buck sergeants and staff sergeants that will start out on a patrol from one side of Baghdad, fight their way to the other, just to go ahead and drop off supplies and they continue on to the range so they can train and fight their way back to the forward operating base. That is testimony to the educational system and the depth of our leadership that we have in the Army today, sir.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentlelady from Virginia, Mrs. Drake.

Mrs. DRAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your service and thank you for being here with us today to share your stories.

Sergeant Major, that was very, very uplifting to hear what you said and waving and they waved back to you. I think that is very important.

I recently came back from Iraq with men and women that I met with at much lower ranks than you are all in, but it seemed to me it is exactly what you said, that they know exactly what they are doing, they are committed that we will not have another attack on our soil. They know why they are there. Their question was, why don't the American people know why they are there, and they really wanted to know what are people saying at home, what are people thinking at home.

And just this morning on the news, I heard a story about *The New York Times* taking an excerpt from a letter from a man who was killed who his family claimed he was very grateful for what our forefathers have done so that we would be a free people and felt he had an obligation to go and do the same thing. Fortunately, that letter is coming out now and that that was not his letter and I just thought I would ask you about that and what your perception is.

You have mentioned the media. I don't know how we fix that, other than we have made a commitment here in Congress to take the floor of the House and to talk about what you are doing and why you are doing it. But, to me, that is the thing that is hard is to see in their eyes that they really want to know what are people at home saying. So I didn't know if you would like to comment on that.

And to also say what Mr. Skelton has said is, we want to help you if we can, and the only real discussion I had in Iraq was, should members of the Army go for a full year, so you might even address that, where our airmen go for four months or six months and Navy goes for six.

General, I didn't meet any Marines on my trip, so I don't know how long they go to Iraq for, whether they go for a full year or somewhat less than that.

So those are the two things; if you could comment on the media and the impact it has on our men and women over there, as well as how long should people be there?

The other side of that is, they do all seem to offer to go back and they talked about that, that they knew that they would be coming back, and they want to come back. So I am very grateful.

And the only other thing I would say, General, is they may be regular people but they are truly extraordinary people, and I believe history will name them just like they named the men of World War II.

Colonel ABRAMS. Ma'am, I would first like to say I appreciate you going over there to visit. I think that is great. Unfortunately, I was on a part of the side of Baghdad that didn't get to see many congressional delegations. They seemed to come when things were fairly bad and not very safe, but I appreciate you doing that.

Ma'am, first about the media, your question about the media. We dealt with the media extensively in country, and when we could get them to come and cover good news story and positive things that were going on, it was always, I can say, except in one circumstance in a year, every story that was done on our unit was fair and balanced.

But here is the challenge: When we were conducting those two periods of full-scale combat operations, I had requests for in-beds more than I could handle. Everyone wanted to come watch the fighting—everyone. And I didn't have the capacity to handle them all. I had to cycle them through so that everybody would get a chance to be with our soldiers in the middle of the fight.

When the fighting was stopped, militia were done, they were turning in their weapons and declared that they were no longer hostile, suddenly no one wanted to embed with us. And we had a lot of good things. We made an immediate transition. As soon as fighting was done, we set the conditions with projects in the queue, contracts were ready to go, and we immediately started reconstruction where a week prior we had been fighting for our lives. And that is where it became difficult.

But I do want to highlight to you that we never had a problem getting Iraqi media. The Iraqi media was very forthcoming. We found them to be very, very professional. They were always fair and balanced. They may not have submitted their stories exactly in a timely manner, it may have been a week or so before we saw them in the Iraqi newspapers, but without exception, their reporting was completely accurate.

They enjoyed the opportunity to exercise their freedom of speech; in fact, they reveled in it. And so it was very easy for us to get Iraqi media to come and cover openings of schools, delivery of backpacks, humanitarian aid distribution, opening of sewage lift stations, so forth and so forth. Those were covered constantly by the Iraqi media and always very well done.

Ma'am, to your second question on full-year tours, that is really a question that is best left for the commander of Multi-National Forces Iraq and the senior leaders of our armed forces in terms of our rotational strategy. But there is a requirement for manpower in country, and to maintain the tempo that we need, a year is about right. But there is a lot more to that that really needs to be answered by much senior leaders in the Army than me.

Thank you, ma'am.

General KELLY. Ma'am, if I could just add, the Marine Corps deployments and the Navy deployments overseas are seven months. We have been doing deployments away from home, aboard ship and places like that since about 1945, and we have kind of figured out that is good for us.

Now, that also means they come back for seven months, then go back over for seven months. But the families prefer it that way, and, certainly, the Marines seem to prefer it. And, again, we could go in another forum and talk about what advantages for the Marine Corps. It is harder to manage that for the institution, but it keeps their heads in the game, and as they start to tire, they come out, get a break back at Camp Pendleton, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, places like that and then roll right on back in.

Your comments about the media, a couple of personal observations. When I came back in August of last year, I didn't realize how bad the war was going until I got back to the United States and read it in the media.

What was disappointing to me was is, clearly, we were not, in my estimation, a nation at war, and when I came back here to Washington, it didn't seem to me that we were a capital at war.

I have two sons in the Marine Corps, both of them served in Iraq. Both of them are home but about to go back over. And what I just said about not realizing how bad it was going, they essentially said the same thing when they came back. One is an infantryman lance corporal, enlisted man, the other one is an officer who is serving with force reconnaissance.

And the constant pounding of negative and, in their opinion, unrepresentative or not a complete representation of the facts, the constant pounding about casualties and things like that, as opposed to the cooperation with the rebuilding of the country, cooperation with the Iraqi people, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, it was demoralizing to them. I mean, I am an old guy, I kind of understand it. They are not old guys, and they didn't understand it.

Major CITOLA. I think a year deployment is about right. That is my personal opinion. Professionally, I understand why we as an Army are forced to do that, in some respects, and when you look at the natural cycle and maturation process you go through in the combat theater of operations, again, I think it is about right.

If I was going to recommend anything else, I would do it in a closed forum, but until the Army can go ahead and flesh out the additional brigade teams they are working on right now, it is going to be tough, but a year committed allows us about a year back home, ma'am.

You know, ma'am, it is interesting, you talk about the media, and, yes, ma'am, as the colonel and the general mentioned, when the bullets start to fly, ma'am, people always start to break out cameras. When one of the early successes that the 2nd Brigade Combat Team realized early on outside of Camp Victory, just east of the Baghdad International Airport was the Baghdad Agricultural College and the Baghdad Veterinary University that had been shut down a couple years before the American invasion and had been grossly underfunded during Saddam's regime, or at least the last 10 to 11 years.

Number one, both those institutions were reopened. They were repaired, they were reopened, they were restaffed, they were re-equipped with monies that were approved both in Iraq and from institutions, be they public and private back in the United States. As a matter of fact, exchange programs were established through the Army by which professors of education were flown back to the United States, and they established partnership institutions here in the continental United States, and some other instructors went back to those institutions in Baghdad. And, today, those arrangements continue to flourish. None of that was covered in the media, ma'am—none of it.

Ma'am, ladies and gentlemen, I don't know if you had an opportunity to read it but there is a book out called, "1776." I just finished that thing. I continue to go ahead and learn more and more about George Washington and realize that he is a whole lot more than a face on the dollar bill—a man of tremendous substance and self-discipline and will power.

You know, it is amazing, I look at the 20,000 to 30,000 young American continentals that committed themselves to something when fully 60 to 70 percent in some cases of those who occupied this country at the time in its infancy were opposed to separating from Great Britain. And these young Americans stood the course. And it wasn't a short affair. All of us in here that have a decent education realize that it took about eight years to go ahead and win our independence.

You know, I wonder what would have happened if the American media that we have today would have been back there then. But that is okay. I believe that as long as you have sufficient depth of character and will to go ahead and support us in our effort and to help us finish something that we started, it will all be okay, ma'am.

Mrs. DRAKE. Thank you very much.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

I am going to ask the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Reyes. He has got a few comments and questions. And then I want to ask—I know, General Kelly, you had some individual descriptions of some of what our individual Marines had done, and I would like you to tell us about that a little bit, but we will go with Mr. Reyes first, and then we will let you do that. I should have invited you to do that when you made your opening statement.

The gentleman from Texas, who has been to theater about 10 times and who has really put a lot of time in with our folks in uniform.

Mr. REYES. Well, Mr. Chairman, I would be glad to wait to have him tell his story. That is fine.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I thank the gentleman.

General Kelly, are there any particular citations that come to mind?

General KELLY. Well, it just so happens, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Good.

General KELLY. And, in fact, I thought—my apologies to my two colleagues—I thought that all of us were going to have the opportunity to do this. And I have got a coupe here, Marines and sailors,

but you can put soldier, sailor, airman, Marine in here. It is all truly the same.

The first one that I have, and I will maybe just read all of the citation, but before I do I just want to ask everyone in the room to think about something that happened in their lives that absolutely scared them to death and how terrifying that event may have been. And then think of maybe the most danger you have ever been in in your life, not danger that happened that may have happened to you where someone ran a red light and hit you, but I mean that you personally knew as incredibly dangerous and you went ahead and did that.

The first one is not a Marine, it is a Navy doctor, one of our corpsman. There is no more beloved individual in any Marine unit than our Navy medical people, both our enlisted corpsmen and our doctors. And they save our lives.

And I would also offer before I read this that in responding to an awful lot of congressional inquiries on wounded Marines, terribly wounded Marines and sailors, I have had occasion to talk to some of the great surgeons at places like Brooke Army Hospital and Lackland, the Air Force hospitals and all, reconstructive surgeons. They all say essentially the same thing, but one of them said it best.

He said, "You know, sir, on these reconstructions where someone has come up here and lost a face or lost most of their body, three years ago the only place we could have seen these types of injuries, and this is a challenge, frankly, to the nation, to the Veterans Affairs (VA), the only time we have ever seen these kind of injuries before three years ago was in a morgue. Now, these people like this young man are saving them on the battlefield and shipping them home. And a whole new kind of branch of medicine, and that is how do you take care of these terribly wounded individuals, particularly the facial injuries?"

This particular young man at the time this happened was 20 years old. He is actually from Mr. Robin Hayes' district and also from Mr. Mike McIntyre's district. He has got a foot in each one. His name is Luis Fonseca, and almost three years ago these actions took place and the president of the United States thought so much of these actions he got a Navy cross for it.

For services set forth in the following citation: "Extraordinary heroism, as corpsmen Amphibious Assault Vehicle Platoon Company C, 1st battalion, 2nd Marines, Task Force Tarawa, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 23 March 2003.

During Company C's assault and seizure of the Saddam Canal across the Euphrates River, five casualties resulted when an amphibious vehicle was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. Without concern for his own safety, Hospitalman Apprentice Fonseca braved small arms fire, machine gun and intense rocket-propelled grenade fire to evacuate wounded Marines from the burning amphibious assault vehicle.

He established a casualty collection point inside the unit area and methodically stabilized two casualties that had both suffered traumatic leg amputations by applying tunicates and administering morphine. Hospitalman Apprentice Fonseca then continued to treat



and care for the wounded until his vehicle was rendered immobile by enemy fire.

Under a wall of enemy machine gun fire, he directed the movement of four casualties from the damaged vehicle, his own, by organizing litter teams from available Marines. He personally carried one critically wounded Marine over open ground to another vehicle. Following a deadly artillery barrage, he again exposed himself to enemy fire to treat wounded Marines along the perimeter. His timely and effective care had undoubtedly saved the lives of numerous casualties by his outstanding display of decisive leadership, unlimited courage in the face of heavy enemy fire.

In utmost devotion to duty, Hospitalman Apprentice Fonseca reflected the great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the naval service. For the President, Gordon England, Secretary of the Navy.”

I think the theme here is, our medics, corpsmen and Army, they make house calls and they wear Navy crosses doing it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, General.

I might ask the colonel and command sergeant major if you folks had any particular individuals that come to mind that you thought would be good to talk to us about.

Colonel ABRAMS. Sir, if it is acceptable to you, I do not have a citation but I have personal knowledge of several heroes from my formation, and I can recount their stories pretty accurately without having the citation in front of me.

The CHAIRMAN. Please.

Colonel ABRAMS. Sir, at 1745 on the 4th of April, 2004, 1st Platoon Charlie Company 25 Cavalry was conducting a reconnaissance on Route Delta in Sadr City. There had been no contact in that city since the 9th of October. We were in the middle of transition with the 2nd Army Cavalry Regiment. Unbeknownst to us, earlier that day, Muqtada al-Sadr issued a directive to his subordinates to attack all coalition forces.

This infantry platoon, led by Lieutenant Shane Aguero, was told to conduct reconnaissance and head back to the camp. They encountered a group of about 200 men, armed, discussed with them, realized that they were outgunned, they were manned in M114s, these 20 soldiers, this infantry platoon.

Sir, they moved about 150 meters north on Route Delta where they started sustaining heavy machine gun rifle fire, rocket propelled grenade (RPG) fire, and in about 15 minutes they were under attack by what we estimate to be about 1,000 militia fighting along Route Delta on a 2-block period. Two vehicles were immediately immobilized. The gunner on the platoon leader's vehicle was killed in action immediately. There were two others seriously wounded. Platoon leader and platoon sergeant made a decision to go to ground and go inside to an alleyway.

In the course of that, the two vehicles were abandoned. The remaining surviving members of that platoon moved into an alleyway, took control of a residence, secured the family. There was a mother with three young children, properly secured them out of harm's way. Staff Sergeant Eric Bourquin moved to the roof of that building with one other soldier and set up a machine gun position, an automatic weapons position to provide cover for the platoon.

And now we are up to seven wounded with one killed in action. Sergeant First Class Jerry Swope stayed in his vehicle in the alleyway under constant fire, because he was the only radio that was left surviving, and he was the only guy who could communicate with his higher headquarters to call for relief, be a quick reaction, force the rest of the battalion to coordinate with aviation and so forth.

So over the span of that next four hours of sustained combat where we tried, initially unsuccessfully and then successfully, to recover that platoon, Sergeant First Class Swope stayed in that vehicle by himself in the alleyway. The vehicle, the M1114 up-armored Humvee, sustained over 15 RPG direct hits. He was wounded himself. He was personally responsible for the direction of close air support, rotary wing, aviation that was called in for close air support to protect the platoon.

Up on the roof, Staff Sergeant Bourquin was busy attending to trading places between downstairs attending to wounded with the platoon medic and leading the machine gun squad that was up top.

Sir, it is now dark, the city was completely covered in smoke. We could not find the platoon. Sergeant Bourquin had the presence of mind to pull up his shirt under fire, set it on fire as a signaling device to the rotary wing aviation and was able to bring them in close proximity to the platoon's position, provide final protective fires until the tank platoon was able to reach the platoon and extract them.

Sir, for their actions that day, Sergeant First Class Swope was awarded the Silver Star, and Staff Sergeant Bourquin, who was also wounded in action in the same action, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.

Sir, I have got about 500 more of those kinds of stories, and I know we don't have time for that today, but my point to you is that that is going on, those types of actions of individual courage and bravery are going on every day, and I echo the general's comments. We have got some tremendous heroes in our formations, and they are incredible.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much. Great testimony.

You know, one thing that you would mentioned before, General Kelly, was the fact that you train all your Marines to be riflemen, and this last weekend I had the privilege of taking a couple of guys from 2-4, elk hunting in Colorado, a couple of Marines that had been wounded in the Ramadi area, and the guy that we were with was a legendary Marine named Vic Taylor who was with 2-4 in Vietnam, in the Battle of Dai Do. And I thought it was interesting that he took these two young Marines from this war and kind of took them under his wing and had a great time with them.

One thing that they mentioned that came to me was that you had in Ramadi, you had some real intense fighting with a couple of the units with 2-4 where literally everybody, including the cooks, became riflemen.

So could you expound on that a little bit, because I know that has been a tradition that everybody could use those weapons at the right time, and I think you had to do that in that AOR.

General KELLY. Yes, sir. It wasn't so many years ago, frankly, that we were criticized on Capitol Hill, not necessarily by very

many remaining members of this committee, but we were criticized for the length of our boot camp, which is long but not long enough, in our opinion, and the fact that we run every Marine through infantry training regardless of what his MOS is. And, of course, then if he is an infantryman, he continues on for additional training.

Same thing with our officers. Every officer in the Marine Corps, regardless of what they will ultimately do, goes to Quantico to a six-month course down there, much of which is infantry training, and they come out of there not a qualified infantry platoon commander but a qualified, kind of, rifleman platoon commander, if you will.

And as I say, it wasn't so many years ago we were criticized to eliminate much of that training, but, I will tell you, when it hits the fan and when everyone is a shooter, regardless of whether he is a truck driver or a mechanic or a cook, when everyone is a shooter and doesn't hesitate to grab a rifle and go do his business, you mentioned Ramadi 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, "The Magnificent Bastards," their call sign.

Paul Kennedy, the battalion commander called me just into April. We took over on the 26th. And he was working, by the way, for a great outfit commanded at the time by Colonel Buck Connor, United States Army, 1st PCT of the 1st Infantry Division.

And they were in the city, in any event, and it was just after we took the AOR. He called me because all of a sudden, and it happened all over the country, I mean, Fallujah, Al Qaim, the northern Babil, it all just kind of erupted, and we were in Fallujah, fighting Fallujah. I didn't want to go in the way we did, but we were ordered in and then of course just about 85 percent of the city was in our hands when we were told to stop and withdraw. And I know you have got some personal experience of that.

But in any event, Paul Kennedy called me and said, "Look, I need help. I am in Ramadi. I have got every single Marine I own fighting. And my sergeant major, Sergeant Major Booker, has been doing this, that and the other thing," as he described it to me. And sergeants major are not supposed to necessarily do these things, but, in any event, he won the Silver Star doing them.

He said, "Every one of my Marines, and my back is against the wall. Reserve committed. I need help." And I said, "Every battalion we own is in the same situation. Can't help you." He said, "Thanks, got it." At the end of the day, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines was the only unit standing in the city, but that is kind of the leadership, that is kind of the sergeants major, whether they are Marines or Army. That is the kind of dedication, that is kind of what they do.

I don't know if that answers it, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that describes it well.

Command Sergeant Major Citola, you have any particular soldiers that come to mind that you would like to talk about?

Major CITOLA. Sir, I went on countless patrols with soldiers across the depth and breadth of brigade in the 1st Cavalry Division. I could speak of them, but I think it is probably more fitting, given what the general and the colonel have brought with them and the firsthand accounts, sir.

People always try to protect me from myself when I get over there, in many instances. I see you nodding, sir. But, sir, I will tell

you the stories that I want to pass on too, and this goes back to I have been a combat soldier for 29 years, sir, and if I had to do it all over again, I would do it exactly the same way.

But I have a penance that I pay every day to specifically the combat service support soldiers of the American Army, the youngsters that fuel it, feed it, fix it, bandage it up, sustain it, repair it, and so on. We all have a tendency to go ahead and rush to the sound of the guns. Our elected officials when they come to see us they want to get to the tip of the spear and find out what is going on.

But another group of heroes which are present is the youngsters that have to go ahead and travel those roads every day and bring forward the supplies that are critical to sustaining our operation, but also the youngsters that take those Humvees, those light medium tactical vehicle (LMTV), family of medium tactical vehicles (FMTVs) and those Hemets, the tanks, the Bradleys, and they rebuild them, literally, while we are forward deployed.

And I have spent countless hours with those young men and women, and it is a point of honor for them to go ahead and take a piece of equipment that many other people would probably have a tendency to go ahead and attempt to code out and resurrect that thing that put it back in the hands of their soldiers.

I can't tell you, sir, and ladies and gentlemen, the number of times I have gone to every one of the forward operating bases associated with the 1st Cavalry Division and the maintenance or motor sergeants that walk their forward operating bases on a recurring basis and they see something wrong with a vehicle and they say, "You are not leaving till that is fixed." They pull it in there, whether it is a blown out windshield from an IED or whether your wearing harness has been destroyed.

And I will tell you in all honesty one of the best maintenance operations I saw as part of the 1st Cavalry Division while we were over there came out of my 15th Personnel Services Battalion at Camp Liberty, and they helped soldiers out of 2-5 Cavalry, 2-8 Cavalry, Marines, Air Force and on and on and on.

But there are tremendous stories in and of themselves, sir, occurring every day with our logistical supporters and our ordnance type, sir, and I ask that we not forget them.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Command Sergeant Major.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Reyes.

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here this morning and hearing your testimony and your support for the troops, and knowing that we have that kind of leadership gives me a great sense of comfort.

At the same time, my greatest frustration as a Member of Congress and as a veteran who knows and understands exactly what you meant, General Kelly, when you are so scared that you lose control of your body functions and don't realize it at the time until you have realized that you have made it through that episode that was so horrifying, it frustrates me, and I am haunted by what General Shinseki said when we were on our way to El Paso to a memorial service for the 507, the first casualties in An Nasiriyah, and that was that we have such great soldiers.

And it mirrors just exactly what the command sergeant major said. They are extremely professional, they are smarter, they are better, they are educated, more capable, they are courageous. And when he said that, he also said, "You know, our men and women in uniform are so good, they are good enough not to have to fight. We ought to be able to understand that war should be a last option, and we ought to say if it is going to take a company, we go in with a brigade. If it is going to take a brigade, we go in with a division, whatever."

I am paraphrasing what he said, but what he meant was that we have invested so much in you and we have such pride in the stories that you tell and the stories that we know, because I have visited Brooks and I have visited Bethesda and Reed and Beaumont in my own district, and so I know exactly how proud you are, because I have shared that pride to the point of having tears come out of my eyes to see such courageous, professional, dedicated, great Americans in situations that under normal circumstances somebody else might, a lesser person might say, "You know what? Why me? What am I going to do?" And they don't. They just want to tell you how proud they are to have worn that uniform.

So my frustration is compounded when I feel that we have failed you. We fail you because we are not doing everything that we can to support you and maybe politically should have more courage to stand up and say, "They need more of this, they need more support here or there." I can give you one example.

When you mention, General, the budget challenge to the VA because they have to reconstruct and have to take care of families and all of that, and every time that we have voted for a supplemental here, one of the things that I have felt has been important to do is take a part of that supplemental and put, the last time was \$1.3 billion, into the VA because they had that kind of a shortfall. Yet we failed to get it passed. The whole supplemental went through without not one penny going to the VA, to the very soldiers that we are so proud of, the very soldiers that have given their all for this country, and we all ought to be standing up for them.

When we talk about the conflict and the war and sacrifices that they are making, I am haunted by the fact that the soldiers that are coming out of or coming back from Afghanistan have told me, "Don't forget about us," because we are so focused on Iraq. And that hurts me. That hurts me that there are men and women in uniform in places around the world that think we have forgotten about them and we don't know they are there and we don't know that they too are making that commitment.

My pride is such that a few months back I went back and I read the "Charge of the Light Brigade," by Lord Tennyson, because you can be so proud of the work and what you gentlemen represent, but I don't want to see you or our men and women in uniform charge just for the sake of somebody's pride or arrogance. If you need a company, I want you to come in with a division and just wipe people off.

As the chairman notes, we are still fighting the challenges of, it used to be the grenades and the mortar, then it became the IEDs, now it is the shaped charges that are taking down, Colonel, the

tanks that are named after your dad. That frustrates me, and we ought to be able to do better for you.

Yesterday, and I mentioned this to the general before we started, yesterday, in the headlines of *The Washington Post*, it talked about the secret prisons and the techniques that are being used against our enemies to get information from them.

And, Command Sergeant Major, last night, I was struck by your reference to your son because last night I had about a 45-minute conversation with my daughter who was asking me about that, who had read that article and was asking, "Dad, you have always told us that we are the good guys. People want to come to this country because of who we are and what we represent."

And what really kicked me in the gut was when she asked me, she said, "Dad, have we stopped being the good guys? Are we now in a situation where we are doing the kinds of things that we have always stood up to and stood against?"

And then the real clincher was, "Dad, did you know about this?" And I said, "No, I didn't know about it." I should have known, and I am frustrated and I am embarrassed that we are seeing those kinds of headlines and we are raising those kinds of issues with our children.

So my question, gentlemen, if you will—and, Chairman, thank you so much for giving me some extra time, but this important.

My question to you is, knowing that our men and women in uniform are the best we have ever had, the most educated, the most professional, the most courageous, the most capable, that we are so proud of their work, of their professionalism, of their efforts and everything that they stand for and accomplish for us, do you find that it is going to be a challenge to keep them motivated that we are the good guys when all of this is swirling around?

How do we keep them focused that we are still a nation that people want to come to, a nation that we respect our enemy, a nation that we don't gain anything by adapting tactics that we abhor and we have criticized dictators and others in the past?

These are smart, bright young men and women that read the same thing, are concerned about that same thing. And I am assuming because my daughter has a doctorate in education and follows current events and follows what we are doing. So do you envision that to be a challenge? And if it is, how do we get by it and how can we, as a Congress, help you to bridge that issue if it is an issue?

Major CITOLA. Sir, what I don't want to do is sometimes speak out of turn and incite issues within the armed forces or my Army, but I will tell you what, sir, in answer to your question, what do you need to do, sir? Sir, I don't know, because at my level, as a sergeant, I know that I am obligated to go ahead and provide my country and my Army honorable service.

I know in conversations, and General Chiarelli is probably one of the finest men I have ever known, he reminded me of something. On a couple of occasions in Iraq, sir, when you just want to lash out sometimes when you lose soldiers, we are a nation of laws, and we are obligated as its military to hold ourselves accountable to those laws.

And, sir, I can only tell you that I saw the article, I did not see the verbiage in it, I saw some of the pictures in it in passing that when we experienced the issues as they existed at Abu Ghraib and things of that nature, I attribute that to failures of leadership, we sergeants. You cannot think that you can go ahead and exercise warfare in its present state with any less a modicum of discipline, be it individual, collective, unit, whatever, than we have in years past.

You cannot do those things, from my perspective, our perspective as leaders, without understanding and realizing that you will always be held accountable. You cannot do that and again be a student of history and realize that we will reap in the end more from being the righteous ones than we will if we decide to go ahead and employ the same techniques that those who would like to do us harm do.

The CHAIRMAN. Would the gentleman yield? Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. REYES. I will yield.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman for yielding.

I think my friend from Texas has illustrated one of the reasons why I held this hearing. I asked our staff to count the number of articles that *The Washington Post* did on Abu Ghraib, that a handful of people did at 2 o'clock in the morning, without authorization, with themselves and with prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison.

As I recalled at the time, they had done 56 articles about what a handful of people did on the midnight shift at Abu Ghraib. They would only done 40 articles on the invasion of Normandy from the date of the invasion until the present time.

So the gentleman talks about facts that are swirling around and how something has happened where we detained the people who blow up women and children, detain them, and with the implication that somehow we have been a bad nation. And *The Washington Post* article proves it.

Now, we have a law, I will tell the gentleman, against torture. We are signatories to the Torture Convention, the United States codes have implemented that Torture Convention law as a prohibition. If a U.S. officer or enlisted man or a member of any Federal agency violates that, he is criminally punished.

So if the gentleman will bring to me any people who have violated that law to which we are signatories and which we do not violate, because our officers are informed of their obligations under the United States codes, we will be happy to forward that for criminal prosecution. But as I saw, and I didn't read that entire article, I don't think *The Washington Post* had any allegations that anybody had been tortured at those places but simply that there were places where al Qaeda operatives are kept and are interrogated other than the ones that the gentlemen make the front pages every day, like Guantanamo and other places that are in country.

That is not too profound. We realize that you haven't had new people coming into Guantanamo for along time. So, obviously, they are going to other places. But anybody who violates the United States codes that implement our signature on international agreements with respect to treatment of prisoners is criminally prosecuted.

So if *The Washington Post* wants to try to out somebody that they allege has violated any of those, we would be happy to entertain those and act on them.

But I think the gentleman has made a great point. The gentlemen in front of us have talked about the heroism and the dedication of 148,000 people, and the gentleman from Texas has talked for about 10 minutes about an article which vaguely asserts that somehow America has been bad because we keep people in remote locations.

You have to keep people in remote locations, and you have to keep them segregated and you have to get information from them, because the information that you get from them may save the American lives of some of those great people who are stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas and places like Pendleton, California.

So I thank the gentleman for bringing that up, but I think that shows, in my estimation, the great imbalance of *The Washington Post*, as an example of the American media. Perhaps the most important day in the history with respect to the survival of our nation in the greatest war of this century, the invasion of Normandy, got less press from *The Washington Post* than what 15 people did at midnight in Abu Ghraib.

Mr. SKELTON. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. REYES. Yes, I will.

Mr. SKELTON. What troubles me is that the handful of those who did despicable acts taints the heroism of which these gentlemen speak. That is why it is important that we be transparent, we find out, we publicize and we prosecute and let the justice system work, so that the taint does not touch those upon whom we are hearing today. It is important to do that. Otherwise, the stain could well spread. We don't want that.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Chairman, can I respond, because I don't want you to misunderstand what I said?

The CHAIRMAN. Certainly.

Mr. REYES. I mentioned the article in *The Washington Post* because of the fact that it prompted my daughter to call me and ask me if we are still the good guys. These guys represent the good guys. These guys here are what makes you and I so proud of our military and our military leadership.

To somehow turn away from issues or problems that are our responsibility—and I would remind you, Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, that when we heard the facts in Abu Ghraib, there were people there that were naked in jail cells for days at a time, for a week at a time. So it wasn't 2 a.m. in the morning, and it wasn't just one rogue group.

We never had, in my opinion, Mr. Chairman, and I know you and I have had a number of discussions, but we haven't done the oversight, in my opinion, that needs to be done to hold people accountable, whoever is accountable.

We have had information, documented information, that decisions were made by people to suspend the Geneva Conventions. The article yesterday made mention of several other concerns in terms of our being signatory to treaties.

But what I am concerned here, and all of that aside, is not to add to the burden of our great military leadership, and that is why



I said, how can we help, because questions are going to be asked by bright, articulated, educated men and women in uniform that aren't turning away from all this. I mean, they read the same newspapers we do, they look at the same news. The government issue (GI) grapevine is one of the most amazing things, for those of us that are veterans, of anywhere. That is the original Internet, as far as I am concerned.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, here is what I would just respond to my friend, because I know—and he has got one of the finest, most wonderful families of any Member of Congress. And we are going to both stipulate, your daughter is probably brighter than most members of the House of Representatives.

What you can tell her is that the young people—and they are mainly young folks who operate with our other agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in remote, dangerous, difficult parts of the world—aren't mercenaries, they aren't some dark side villains who somehow are separated from the rest of America, generally speaking, they are really good people, like the young former Marine who was killed in the prisoner camp by Taliban members who was well publicized early in the war. A lot of them are former service members.

They are very professional people, and they are, in most cases, every bit the same people as General Kelly and Colonel Abrams and Command Sergeant Major Citola we are talking about. They do a good job, they are professionally schooled, and they don't torture people.

So the idea that somehow the fact that you have places where we take the al Qaeda when we capture them, that our intelligence agencies take them and they interrogate them, that is their job.

And I would just say to the gentleman that the fact that you have locations where people are interrogated isn't too profound, but the Americans who operate for our intelligence agencies—you know, one time I heard one of our now distinguished members of the Senate, as a representative, speak on the floor as if the personnel in our intelligence agencies were somehow mercenaries, that we have gone through this era of movies in which every time a CIA person is depicted they are depicted as some kind of a drug lord or they have done something nefarious or wrong or bad.

These people, in many ways, are very ordinary people. In other ways, they are very extraordinary people. They did in small remote, very inconvenient places around this world, fighting for our country.

So the first thing I would say to all young people who read *The Washington Post* article is that we have great people operating these agencies, they observe the rules, and they observe all the rules with respect to—and if they don't observe the rules, there is U.S. code, U.S. law under which anybody, whether you are in the CIA or you are under the Department of Defense, if you break that law, you are criminally prosecuted.

So you can tell all young folks that we have laws that protect even people who blow up buses full of children.

The other thing that I think is interesting is that when we went to Guantanamo—and the gentlelady from San Diego was with us on that trip, and most of us have been to Guantanamo—is that the

terrorists today who are held, including Mr. Osama bin Laden's bodyguards and the 20th hijacker, have a right to counsel.

And so I would just tell the gentleman, they have a right at Guantanamo. We all appreciate our soldiers. Our soldiers, if they are captured, don't have a right to a lawyer. The terrorists who are kept at Guantanamo have a right to a lawyer. They have more rights under the American system than our soldiers have if they are captured on the battlefield.

So my presentation to young people in this country is that we are a good and great nation, and the people that operate in our intelligence agencies are very, very fine people. And I didn't see anything in the article that states that they are not, other than the fact that we interrogate people and when we capture al Qaeda members we keep them in undisclosed locations. And I think there a lot of very, very good reasons for doing that.

I appreciate the back and forth with my good friend from El Paso.

Mr. REYES. I am being pressured by my colleagues here, can we let them go now?

The CHAIRMAN. Certainly.

I want to recognize the—I thank my friend—and the gentleman from Arkansas, Dr. Snyder.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will have some comments to make here in a minute about this discussion you all have had.

Colonel Abrams, I appreciate you being here. On a personal note, I am sure you know the great pride people feel for your father. My dad—he passed away—but my father was with the 4th Armored Division, and you know how we all get, we tell the same story several times, but several times through the years with great pride he told me that for a period of time that your father was his battalion commander and what that meant to him. He was a hell of a fighter. I appreciate you being here.

And, General Kelly, I think I look back, either with consistency or the candor or fear, I remember when I enlisted in the Marine Corps when they had the 2-year enlistment years ago, I put in 21.5 months, as you know, not 21.5 years. But before I took the oath, the fellow said to me, young lieutenant, "There are two kinds of Marines: Those that have been to Vietnam and those that are going." And, apparently, the Marine Corps candor and enlistment time has stuck, and I appreciate that.

I thought that the thing that most caught my attention, and I really appreciate you all's service and what you have had to share, but, General Kelly, is when you said when you came back and it did not seem like we were a nation at war, and then you very specifically said, with somebody with your experience in this town, that it does not seem to be a capital at war.

I mean, that caught me in the gut, what that means to the young men and women to come back here and think that their capital is not fighting that same war.

I said to myself, I suspect if you ask most people up here, "How is the fight going," they would think, well, it means between over the Supreme Court nomination, it means between the House Republicans and House Democrats, it means the fight that we had a

day or two ago in the secret session of the Senate. But I suspect if you said, "How is the fight going," just as a morning greeting, no one, except for our men and women in uniform, would respond with what happened the last 24 hours. I think that is pretty sad.

Mr. Chairman, a lot of us have suggested topics for hearings. Mr. Skelton has sent a recent letter on hearings. A lot of times we hear, "Well, it is difficult in the schedule." You have created a time here this morning, this 8:30 slot, and I would hope that, in line with General Kelly's comment, that this capital would probably be better if we were more as a capital acknowledging we were a nation at war. We would do better as a Congress.

The discussion that you just had, you make some good points about *The Washington Post* article. I would encourage you to read the full article. I think it is very concerning. But what you all just did was a mini hearing. Can we get a commitment from you that next week, at some morning, at 8:30, we will have a full hearing, you and I choose the witnesses, on Senator McCain's amendment that passed 90 to 9, and then we can bring in legal experts and have the kind of discussion that keeps this, as the sergeant major said, as the righteous ones?

Can we get some kind of a commitment to use this 8:30 slot? Mr. Skelton suggested several topics. I think that we could do a better job of providing the kind of oversight that we need, particularly on a topic like this that has such controversy about it.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let me just say this to my colleague: We spent a lot of time talking about how we needed to have more hearings on the prisons and on Abu Ghraib and on Guantanamo. We spent more hearing time this past year on Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo than any weapons system, than any discussion about our troops in Iraq, than any other issue, any acquisition program and any other area, to my knowledge, that is within the jurisdiction of this committee.

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Chairman, I did not ask for a hearing on Abu Ghraib. I disagree with your analysis of the work this committee has done. My request was on Senator McCain's amendment. I have got it right here. It is one page. I am not talking about recounting what happened at Abu Ghraib. I am talking about the language of this amendment, which passed the Senate. It is in conference now. It is something that we have not even discussed on this committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let me just respond to the gentleman. The gentleman asked me a question and I am giving him an answer, and I am going to give him, whether he likes it or not, my answer.

And my answer is to review the bidding here, and the bidding is that we had, with respect, because this is an issue, it was brought up on the Senate side, it is a provision that we didn't pass.

And, incidentally, one thing that is lost in all of this discussion, and perhaps some of the senators don't even realize this, that working with members on your side, we put in a number of reforms last year in the authorization bill that are now passed into law. Lots of good stuff with respect to oversight of prison systems, with respect to the professionalism of the people who maintain in country these systems.

I don't think the folks on the other side even read the law that they agreed to and that was signed into conference and ultimately signed by the president.

So this committee has done a number of reforms that I think are probably more far-reaching than the language that the gentleman is talking about.

But my point is on this, in this area, we have held a lot of hearings, and the other thing that we did was we directed and we received voluminous reports that took thousands and thousands of hours and involved thousands of hours of investigation. Now, we took those reports and we have got a number of them in the committee. They are available to any member that wants to review them.

Only a handful of members, with all this information that we directed the services to give us, to shine this sunlight, as Mr. Reyes says, on these facts, with the millions of dollars that the services spent to delivery this to us and that the Department of Defense (DOD) spent, I can count on the fingers of one hand, I think, and we will check the names again because you sign in when you want to review the reports and you sign out, I don't think we had more than a handful of members of this committee or any committee in Congress that when we have done all this work and we presented this big stack of investigations, have read them. And any member can go in right now and read those if they want to.

So my answer is that I think we have not only had a balanced agenda of hearings, but I think, in a way, it has been in fact a little bit imbalanced. And the gentleman, you had members who wanted to have a hearing on Guantanamo. We went down, we took a CODEL to Guantanamo, we came down, we had a full hearing on Guantanamo.

So there is one provision now that has been offered on the Senate side. It is probably going to be manifested in a motion to instruct. We are going to have lots of debate on it. And, no, I don't think that the amendment that was offered on the Senate side, which, incidentally, lots of members voted on not even knowing what the current law is with respect to torture, I don't think that that requires a full hearing.

I think we are having a pretty good hearing on it right now, right? I have cited to Mr. Reyes the law that is the present prohibition against that type of activity. And I will tell the gentleman, if there is any accusation of any member of DOD or any agency who has violated that law, I will be happy to join with them in seeing to it that justice is done under the uniform code of military justice or under the Federal statutes that relate to those prohibitions.

Mr. SKELTON. Does the gentleman yield?

Dr. SNYDER. I think Mr. Chairman controls the time.

The CHAIRMAN. I would be happy to yield, absolutely.

Mr. SKELTON. Whoever has the time.

The CHAIRMAN. We are having a good discussion here.

Mr. SKELTON. I have a question of Dr. Snyder. The article of which you speak is *The Washington Post* article regarding the CIA having secret detainees in secret places; is that correct?

Mr. REYES. That is the one that I mentioned. I don't think Dr. Snyder mentioned any article.

Mr. SKELTON. The question arises in that regard, what, if any, connection the Department of Defense, if any, had with that. That would be a proper subject that this committee should look into. Do you not agree?

Dr. SNYDER. Yes.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you.

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Chairman, may I have some time?

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely. But let me just say this: Why don't we go through our hearing and see if the other members have questions that they want to ask of our witnesses, and then I will be happy to engage the gentleman at the backend of this hearing.

But let me just say to my friends—

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Chairman, I don't get any more time?

The CHAIRMAN. No, you are. I will go back and you will get all the time you want. But my recommendation is that let's let Ms. Davis and Mr. Meeke go through their questions and then we will go back to the gentleman. Is that okay? Does the gentleman want to take this time now?

Dr. SNYDER. I would like to have whatever time I had remaining that I was not speaking, which I think was probably 2 or 3 or 4 minutes.

The CHAIRMAN. You go right ahead.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you. Appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. In fact, we will give you another 5 minutes.

Dr. SNYDER. That would be fine.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay.

Dr. SNYDER. Here is my concern. I don't want to bait my chairman again, I appreciate the discussion, but we have not had the kind of hearing, in my opinion, on this side that we ought to have. A motion to instruct conferees on the House floor is the word, abdication of the responsibilities of the House Armed Services at a time of war.

It is another reflection, in my view, General Kelly, that we are not acting like we are a capital at war when we say, well, we are going to have an hour-long discussion on the House floor on something as important as that.

There are two issues, in my view, with regard to the language, whether it is right or wrong, on Senator McCain's amendment.

One issue, Sergeant Major, is what you said: What do we need to do as a nation in our laws, if that is what it takes, to be sure that we and the world know we are the righteous ones?

The second issue for me, and it may well be more important, is I put myself, if I am sitting here and I come in some morning and someone says, "Guess what? General Kelly and Colonel Abrams and the sergeant major were captured, and they are prisoner of war (POWs). And guess what? We just got notice from whoever captured them, whatever enemy it may be, that they are going to treat them every bit as good as the allegations that were made in *The Washington Post* article yesterday morning," which would include, near as I can tell, being stripped naked in a cell so cold that you freeze to death. I don't think that is what we are about.

I think one of the reasons we take the high road is we want to send the message out there to everyone, including Silvestre Reyes' daughter, we are the righteous ones.

Number two, we set a conduct, a standard for the world that we can absolutely insist that if any of you, God forbid, are POWs, you will be treated well. And I think that that discussion needs to continue.

General Kelly, I wanted to ask you, one of the ongoing discussions we have had up here, and several of us have asked General Myers and the Secretary of Defense several times, about the level of troop strength. And we always get the answer that any commander, if they need additional equipment, troops, all they have to do is ask for it. And yet you recited a scenario an hour ago or so in which, clearly, your backs were against the wall. People wanted more troops, reserve forces had all been utilized.

Now, that happens sometimes in war. The issue then, I think, for us, as a Congress, and us, as a nation, is if that situation comes again, do we want you to have available resources? And Senator McCain has said for a couple of years now that there should have been additional troops in Iraq. Have we unintentionally created a system where the word has gotten around that the troop strength is going to stay right about where it is, it is not going to go up in any dramatic fashion, there isn't really any reason to make requests for additional troops for any sustained period?

Have we unintentionally created a system where you all have a can-do spirit, you are going to do the best job you can with what you have, even though your opinion may be, "If I had an additional 5,000, 10,000, 20,000 troops along the Syrian border or in this area, I could do a much better job of achieving the goals that the sergeant major outlined so well for the Iraqi people."

General KELLY. Well, sir, I have been out for over a year, but I will tell you this: When the period I described where we had literally all of our battalions along the rat line, from Fallujah—well, actually, from the northern Babil, Babylon, all the way up to the Syrian border, and the rat line being the Euphrates Valley where most of our action is, and we had to move forces around internally to the division to deal with Fallujah and to deal with some of the other things, any other places, the commanding general at the time, now Lieutenant General Jim Mattis, indeed, asked for an additional regiment of Marines to be flown out from Camp Pendleton.

At the same time, the great 1st Armored Division had been moved—was on the way home, frankly, coming out of Baghdad, and I forget who was relieving them—were you all? Yes, these guys were relieving them. And they got extended another 90 days and went down to Karbala, Najaf and fought down there.

In the meantime, as that Marine expeditionary units, that float out and have floated out now for 45 years, floated into the Persian Gulf at this period of time, they landed 2 of them as the strategic reserve. We never got with the 5th Marine regiment because by the time, frankly, I mean, we were pretty busy for that several week period, but it started to die down. And as you know, the war over there tends to go up and down in kind of a sign curve.

But to the best of my knowledge, that request for forces was going to be approved. And as I say, you have got a couple of Marine expeditionary units out there, about 2,500 strong, Marines and sailors. They have been periodically landed when additional troops were needed. And as I say, in the case of my recollection of the 1st

Armored Division, they were extended 90 days, which, in essence, is a troop increase. Pretty disappointing to the soldiers, but, again, you tighten your straps, suck it up and I bet they had a pretty high enlistment rate coming up. I think they are out of Germany.

So you always take what you have got and work with it. I certainly have never been told outright in my experiences over there as a general that we could not have more troops. There were a couple times, I mean, that extra regiment certainly would have helped, because we were kind of playing “whack-a-mole” a lot of times as we did even Fallujah II, which was raging about this time last year. Those forces, to build up around Fallujah and go in, had to be taken from another part of the country. But you work with what you have.

And by the same token, I mean, both the Army and Marines were trying to manage this deployment, whether you use a year or seven months. You manage that. More troops obviously mean shorter time at home, but if need be, again, you suck it up, you tighten up your crack straps and you move to the sound of the gun.

I don't know if that answers your question, sir.

Dr. SNYDER. Yes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman.

And the gentleman from Arkansas wanted to maybe get the Army's perspective on that same question. We have got plenty of time.

So, Colonel Abrams, in terms of troop strength, you guys were at the heart of the fight. Did you think you had enough?

Colonel ABRAMS. Sir, I would echo the general's comments. There are times at the tactical level on a daily basis where another battalion would have been handy. And those things happen. But, generally speaking, as the General outlined, the manning strategy is appropriate for the campaign that is being led by General Casey, and troop level strength are really those decisions that need to be made at his level.

Having said that, internally, to the division, I can tell you, more than once, when a brigade combat team, and in my case, specifically, I needed some additional help for a longer duration, I was able to ask for it and I was able to get it inside the 1st Cavalry Division and Multi-National Corps Iraq, and in fact one full infantry was attached to me from about the 10th of August 2004 for about 6 months.

So, sir, if you are suggesting that there is a culture that is developing that says, “Hey, just live within your means, and it is not encouraged to speak up when you need additional troops,” I would say that that is not my experience.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay

Thank the gentleman.

The gentlelady from San Diego, Ms. Davis.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to all of you for being here, for your commitment, your sacrifices, your leadership, really, because I think that is what extends to all the men and women who are serving right now, and

the example you set is so important to them. So I appreciate that greatly, and thank you.

I think, Mr. Chairman, in many ways, I mean, this hearing today has been a really fine example of the work that the men and women in uniform are doing, and I think that is because—really, I think our comments really go to the heart of that, because what worries all of us, on different occasions and in different hearings, is the fact that we know things are distracting from that effort and detracting your ability and the ability of people on the ground, in Iraq, Iraqi soldiers, to do the job that they want so desperately to do.

I would like you to talk a little bit about that and the impact, if anything, that that has.

You mentioned so beautifully, I think, Sergeant Major, that you would much rather, and the men and women would much rather see the grass grow than cut it down. And yet we know that many of the reconstruction projects have gone badly. To what extent does that hurt morale.

I would like you to talk a little bit about the work that you have done with the Iraqi soldiers and their leadership and how that is going, in your estimation. We know how important that is. How do you define success in that regard, and is there a problem? To what extent is the fact that they have such inadequate equipment, in many cases, in contrast to ours? And I am glad that we have much better equipment than we had starting out, but we know that we are still losing a heck of a lot of Iraqi soldiers as well who are in the fight and want to secure their country.

Could you talk some about that and what efforts have gone wrong, have gone badly, have really distracted from your efforts as well?

General KELLY. I have just, again, been out a year, but I read the reports and talk to the commanders fairly frequently, particularly when they come back. As far as the Iraqi security forces, I mean, what always surprises is they keep coming, they keep getting killed, a lot of them, they keep getting blown up by suicide bombers, but there is no lack of enthusiasm on their part to get in the fight.

When I was there we were just starting to train them. I mean, it has taken a long, long time to make the Marine Corps and the Army and, for that matter, the Air Force and the Navy that the United States of America is. You don't do it overnight. It takes 20 years to grow a battalion commander. It takes 7 or 8 years to grow a company commander. It takes 15 or 20 years to grow a sergeant major. So these things don't happen, by any means, overnight.

But I can report that the forces that are operating alongside the Marine forces in Al Anbar, which is, like most of the country, fairly dangerous or very dangerous, they are operating pretty well in terms of the low level. They still have their training wheels on, so to speak, but they are out and about doing their own independent work now. We have instructor teams or advisor teams with them.

But, again, it will take some time before they are able to operate kind of at a battalion level. One of the things they still need is that knowledge that if they really get in kind of a difficult position,



there are soldiers or U.S. Marines—U.S. Army, U.S. Marines ready to help them out.

We have an awful lot of great officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs), staff NCOs from the Marine Corps and the Army that are now kind of embedded with these units and advising them, much like we did in Vietnam, and it was a very successful program there.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. May I ask you, sir, do they feel that they have the training, I guess, the cultural training and, to a certain extent, to be able to do that job to the best extent of their abilities?

General KELLY. I think so. I mean, the language barrier is always there, but, I mean, you make do in terms of interpreters and things like that. But, generally speaking, as I say, the progress is moving forward.

I don't know if the other gentlemen want to comment.

Colonel ABRAMS. Ma'am, again, my experience was two Iraqi and troop battalions under my tactical control, and I echo the general's comments, that in the span of a year with our embedded trainers, they went from platoon to company, to independent battalion level operations. It took some time to find the right leaders, but we found them. They are absolutely coachable. They respond. They have developed an incredible bond with my sister battalions that I had partnered them up with.

They are fearless fighters. We fought alongside our soldiers daily. Had no problem having mixed squads in the back of a very cramped Bradley—three Iraqis on one side, three Americans on the other. Dismount Iraqi squad leader on one side of the street, American squad leader on the other. So we found them to be very, very capable. They are underequipped, and I know that that is a work in progress.

But just to keep things in perspective, as many of you know, as we are modularizing our Army and we are creating some new brigade combat teams, one of which, sir, at El Paso Fort Bliss, our 4th Brigade Combat Team, "Long Knife," just stood up, activated on the 18th of October. That brigade starts from scratch. Brand new soldiers are graduates of advanced individual training (AIT), 16-week course. They have got leaders from across the Army.

Over the span of the next year, we are going to equip them, we are going to man them, and we are going to put them through very deliberate training paces, culminating with a mission exercise.

At the end of that year, we are going to declare them ready for combat and we are going to deploy them. And they are doing that in the United States, out of contact. These Iraqi Army battalions are basically doing the same thing, all the while we use them every day as part of combined operations in theater. So they are learning as they go, but that is a function of the environment, because we need to use them, we need to have an Iraqi face on operations. And they are eager for it.

But they will also be the first ones to tell you that they need our help, and when they get in a pickle, like the general said, if they need a platoon of Bradleys, they need to call and get a platoon of Bradleys to come bail them out. But it is just going to take a little time. But I think their progress is on track.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Could you, sir, respond also to the question in terms of the contracting and the building that soldiers are doing?

Colonel ABRAMS. Ma'am, we got there in March of 2004. The coalition provisional authority (CPA) was still in position. We hadn't transferred sovereignty and so forth. But I think that is history now. I think what is maybe coming out now is history.

In my personal experience, when I left, again, March of this year, those major reconstruction projects were well on their way and in many places nearing completion. One particular, very high profile, at least for east Baghdad, was a sewage treatment plant at Rustamiyah, which is on the east side of the Tigris River that treats all of the raw sewage east of the Tigris River. So it takes care of the sewage for about five million people. It had not been in operation for over 10 years.

And so it took about 16 months to repair, and about a month after we left they opened it up for business, and for the first time in anyone's memory that they can remember the sewage is actually flowing out of places like Sadr City and the district next to it and off the Karada peninsula, and it is actually being treated before it goes and it is put back into the Diyala River and feeds into the Tigris.

So my experience is, is that by the time we left those large-scale projects, at least in my area, were well on their way, and there was an immediate impact, and the people knew it.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My time is up.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I thank the gentlelady.

Gentleman from Florida, Mr. Meeks.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General and Colonel, Command Sergeant Major, it is a pleasure having you before the committee. Great opening statements of what the men and women are doing out there in the field.

I know we had a little discussion—I had to run to a meeting, Mr. Chairman, and got back and found that you were still on the top row, so I am sorry I missed the fireworks.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we try to entertain everyone.

Mr. MEEKS. Okay.

The CHAIRMAN. The only thing I am worried about, Mr. Meeks, is I am going to be out with Mr. Reyes pretty soon, and I don't want his family to be giving me a wire brushing when I get out there. They are always so nice to me.

Mr. MEEKS. Well, Mr. Chairman, I walked in and I saw our panel sitting back in their chairs. I said, "Oh, wow, must be something good going on here."

But I must say, Mr. Chairman, there were two trips to Guantanamo.

I want to say that the discussion that was taking place here that I thought that was meaningful because we need to talk about these things as a committee. We need to know more about what we are doing, and I think the comments that were made that if one of our men or women are captured, we want to be able to wear, if not a white hat, a gray hat, saying, "Treat them as though we would treat yours if we caught them."

And all of the good, and Command Sergeant Major, I heard you speak very passionately about what the men and women are doing, all of you, the projects that are going on in Sadr City. I mean we get this information on the committee but when we have events and instances, above your head and our head, in many cases, where it is found that these individuals are not within our interpretation, that they don't fall under the Geneva Convention, whatever that may be as it relates to Afghanistan, it sends a message out there even though we are doing good. Abu Ghraib sends a message out there, and we have to deal with it in an appropriate way.

Mr. Chairman, you have shared with us before that military justice would be taken out on behalf of those individuals that tolerated that kind of activity and the world saw that, but it is not the thing that is on the six o'clock news. It is not the latest, like you say, car bomb that went off or mortar that hit one of our bases.

I want to just ask one—well, a couple of questions. Recently, we passed—last year, matter of fact, we passed legislation that would reimburse military families for items that they bought for men and women, be it night vision goggles or body armor, what have you. There was a great debate here just about a month ago with the Defense Department because the regs were not written that were supposed to be written in February of this year to give some instruction to military families on how they can be reimbursed.

Is that message getting out to the field, to the men and women, that they can tell their family members that they can get their money back for their supplies or the equipment that they bought with their own money?

General KELLY. It is in the Marine Corps, but I also have to add that just because someone feels as though they need someone, particularly if they have never been to a war, just because they decide they need something and they run down and purchase it, like the latest quick draw holster, in spite of the fact that this person may or may not be armed with a holster or with a pistol, they go down—I mean, they are cautioned about buying things because they may or may not need them.

But, yes, sir, within the limits of the legislation or the regulations, we have made a great effort to get people reimbursed for what they bought. But by the same token, again, it is pretty specific as to what can be reimbursed.

So I don't know if that answers your question. I certainly can't speak for the Army.

Mr. MEEKS. Let's just say body armor, for instance, when they didn't have enough body armor, Kevlar, to go around, and military families heard that their loved ones didn't have what they needed and they—

General KELLY. Speaking for the Marine Corps, no Marine crossed into Iraq without wearing the body armor that we all wear, with the small arms protective inserts (SAPI) plates, with the flack jackets. What we found, and, again, I have enumerable letters from Members of Congress on this issue, what frequently happened was as Marines and sailors were deploying, they would mention to their parents or their parents might ask, "We have not yet received any body armor."

Shame on us for not making them understand that they were going to get the body armor in Kuwait before they went into Iraq. But no Marine went into Iraq without body armor. And the body armor, and I don't know what types they might have been buying, but the SAPI plates, the ceramic plates, are not available on the open market, or at least weren't when we were going into Iraq.

So, again, shame on us for not instructing the young men and women that they would not be going north into the fray unless they had on sufficient body armor.

Mr. MEEKS. Are you giving the notice to those that did have to buy the equipment that falls under what Congress has said that they could be reimbursed for?

General KELLY. Absolutely.

Mr. MEEKS. Okay. So that message is getting out.

General KELLY. Absolutely.

Mr. MEEKS. Okay.

Same for the both of you?

Major CITOLA. Sir, same for the Army, and we pushed the criteria for reimbursement all the way down to the lowest levels—every company, battery and troop. But, sir, to a man and woman in the 1st Cavalry Division, none of them had the Kevlar or body armor or the ceramic inserts.

Mr. MEEKS. Well, it was going on somewhere, gentlemen. I mean, someone bought something that they needed, because they didn't have it or they didn't have enough of it. Matter of fact, that is the reason why we acted. So I just want to make sure that that is getting out to them.

Another point of encouragement I just want to add, I had an opportunity to speak just yesterday with the command sergeant major of the Marines, and we were going to take a trip together but our schedules ended up being cross-wired.

We want to make sure that the folks in the field—I was on the floor recently and one of my colleagues was speaking of a lot of the discussion that is going on now here on the Hill: When we knew what, good information or bad information? This is a discussion of the country.

I wouldn't want our men and women in the field to feel that those that question the reason why or the information that was given to Members of Congress. I wasn't a member when the decision was made to go to war, but I do know that in our democracy we have the discussion. I don't want them to feel that we are leaving any of them behind.

One member said, "It is their war." It was my correction to them that it is our war. Like it or not, we have to make sure that we do what we need to do. From the position of policy makers and those that are making executive decisions, we have to have discourse. We have to have discourse, because we have to make sure that we can hopefully one day get a coalition in that region of the world to come together to take on some of the responsibilities that the 158,000 men and women that are wearing the flag on their shoulder right now are doing.

So I commend you all for coming before the committee. I wanted to make my business of being here this morning after dropping my kids off to school to hear what you had to say, but I can tell you

that it is important that we have the interchange. The chairman and I know, I mean, we have had interchanges before, but, you know, it is not personal, it is just business, and we have to make sure that we have that kind of discourse in this committee.

And I hope that you can pass that on to the men and women that are serving out there. Sometimes they may not understand why we are even questioning some of the things that we are, but it is important so that we can protect them and we can also make sure that the American taxpayer is getting the kind of oversight that they deserve.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for calling this hearing, and I look forward to participating in more hearings like it.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I thank the gentleman and thank him also for the great attention, extraordinary attention that he paid to Guantanamo too, because he was working that issue before we had lots of other folks focused on it. And thank him for his contribution.

And thank all the members and, gentlemen, we are the Armed Services Committee and we have lots of opinions and lots of positions, and we are all independent contractors. But we all unite and stand on the common ground of supporting you.

So thank you for your comments today and this discussion. I think it has been very insightful and it is informative to us, instructive.

You know, what is great about the fact that the services have combat leaders like you available here on Capitol Hill and working on Capitol Hill. What that means is, we should have some real insights into how we do our job in terms of preparing and equipping and funding and overseeing the armed forces. This helps us a lot. It is a lot better than getting reports from the field to have people from the field before us.

Give our best to the folks that wear the uniform of the United States. They are our best citizens, the best ones we have. They come from those middle class backgrounds that the gentleman talked about, but they really are—General Kelly talked about people coming from middle class backgrounds, but, you know, they are America's royalty. That is our idea of royalty.

And we appreciate you very much. Thanks for your testimony and we look forward to talking to you a little bit later and taking some of this instruction that we have received in a number of areas just listening to your testimony and see if we can't translate that into some good policy here as we move forward.

So thank you.

And the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:56 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]



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**A P P E N D I X**

NOVEMBER 3, 2005

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**PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

NOVEMBER 3, 2005

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**OPENING STATEMENT  
THE HONORABLE IKE SKELTON  
HEARING ON "YOUR TROOPS - THEIR STORIES"  
NOVEMBER 03, 2005**

**Thank you Mr. Chairman. Let me join you in welcoming our panel here today. Gentlemen, it is an honor to be in your presence.**

**Thank you very much for your service. Thank you for your personal sacrifice, your families' sacrifice, and most importantly, thank you for looking out for your Marines and soldiers. They are America's most precious resource, and I am glad we have people as capable as you in positions of responsibility.**

**While this is not what we would consider an oversight hearing in the traditional sense, it is important nonetheless. It is too easy to forget that the story of the war, any war, is really the story of countless individuals doing their utmost on the nation's behalf. As I've said before, because we are fighting an insurgency in Iraq that was not adequately anticipated or planned for at the national level, the**

**burden of execution has fallen upon our men and women in uniform. They are performing magnificently, in many cases making up for a lack of strategic foresight with an abundance of energy and common sense.**

**Gentlemen, I look forward to your testimony today. I hope you will share with us some of your most notable experiences and personal observations. That will go a long way in helping the American people understand what is happening in Iraq. With public support for the war drifting lower and lower, it is more important than ever that we let them know about the good things we're doing there.**

**While you are sharing your stories, I hope you'll give us insight into how Congress could better help the war effort. Was your pre-deployment training adequate for the challenges you faced, for example? Did you have all the equipment you required? Did you have all the Marines or soldiers you needed, in the right ranks and with the right skills? What problems did your families face while**

**you were deployed? How are your troops recovering from the stresses of combat? Your answers to these sorts of questions will give us a better appreciation for the challenges that face your and your people.**

**Again, gentlemen, thank you very much for being here today.**

**Thank you for your service.**

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman**