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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

April 10, 2007

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The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

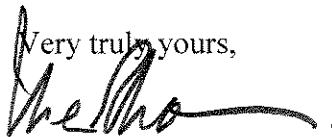
Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you know, I am very concerned about Army readiness. Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee has confirmed that the Army is under enormous stress and strain because of frequent deployments to Iraq. Our non-deployed forces are facing serious readiness challenges as well.

Yesterday, the Department of Defense announced that four National Guard brigade combat teams consisting of over 12,000 soldiers would deploy in December 2007 as replacement forces for formations currently operating in Iraq. Thus, I ask the following questions: What is the Department doing to ensure that these National Guard brigade combat teams are fully trained for the full range of missions they will be asked to perform, especially counter-insurgency tasks, and what is the Department doing to ensure that these forces have all the equipment required for force protection and other mission essential tasks?

Recent news reports also indicate that you are considering a request from General Petraeus, the Commander in Iraq, to extend by four months the deployments of five brigades that are currently scheduled to return home later this summer. If these reports are accurate, I want to express my concerns about the effect these proposed deployment extensions will have on overall Army readiness and morale, as well as the morale of our service members' families.

I write this letter to you with the highest respect and affection for the American soldier. This is a sentiment that I know you share. But I must ask you, Mr. Secretary, where does this end?

Very truly yours,

IKE SKELTON
Chairman

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