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"Today the Committee welcomes the honorable John McHugh, Secretary of the Army; and General George W. Casey, Chief of Staff of the Army to discuss the fiscal year 2012 budget request and the posture of the United States Army. Gentlemen, welcome.

"The Army faces many challenges including continuing support for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq—even as Iraq transitions from a military to a diplomatic mission. We understand that nearly 129,000 of America's Soldiers are deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn.

"We need to hear your views on the state of the personnel who man America's Army. We look forward to discussing recruiting, retaining and caring for the personnel who volunteer to serve our Nation. We also want to discuss the needs that arise from deployments relating to both Soldiers and their families. We are interested in the Army's pre- and post-deployment programs such as the Yellow Ribbon program and the Army's efforts related to counseling, psychological care, and suicide prevention.

"We also look forward to hearing about the material needs of the Army. We want to discuss with you both your successes and challenges. Some specific examples include:

- Stryker: This is a very successful program. It made use of existing technologies and was quickly introduced to the force. The program is also being adapted to address emerging force protection needs through the Double V Hull design. We are interested in future improvements to this program and fielding of the mobile gun system.

- MRAP: This is another example of successfully fielding what soldiers needed in a very expeditious manner. Like Stryker, the vehicle was adapted from existing technology, and further adapted from the original MRAP into the M-ATV which is better suited to the terrain and roads in Afghanistan. We look forward to hearing how this will be integrated into the Army's evolving modernization strategy.

- Soldier equipment: Numerous studies acknowledge that soldiers today are carrying too much weight into combat—often more than 100 pounds. However, the Army's soldier equipment has proven effective. For example, body armor worn by US soldiers has significantly reduced combat deaths. However, the burden placed on troops comes at a cost. Nearly one-third of all medical evaluations of troops deployed to Iraq in Afghanistan from 2004 through 2007 resulted from musculoskeletal or related injuries. We are interested in your views on how to maintain capabilities needed by our troops and at the same time lighten the burden.

- Ground Combat Vehicle (GCV): We understand that the GCV is a central element in the Army's Heavy Brigade modernization strategy. It is intended to replace the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and potentially the M-113 armored personnel carrier. However, the program was delayed in August last year, and it appears that the first GCV will not be fielded for another seven to ten years. We want to discuss whether the Army can more rapidly field this next generation capability.

"In addition to specific programs, there are overarching issues in Defense acquisition that are of increasing concern to me. Whenever we discuss acquiring a new capability, experience shows that the acquisition process takes many years, and recent experience suggests that we may not end up with anything to show for the effort--or expense. Consider the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, the Presidential Helicopter; or the Future Combat System, Crusader artillery system or Comanche helicopter in the Army. The list goes on and on. The current practice is not sustainable, and our nation simply cannot afford this practice. I am very interested in your views on how we can improve up on this.

"We are eager to hear from your on these issues, on the efficiency initiatives that are part of your FY 2012 budget, and on other topics important to the Army. Again, thank you for appearing before the Committee, and thank you for your service to the Nation."

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