

Castle Urges Secretary of Defense to Improve Effectiveness of Military Spending -- August 1, 2007

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware

Congressman Mike Castle today led nine other Members of the House of Representatives in sending a bipartisan letter to the Secretary of Defense, urging him to enact a plan that will help marshal the resources needed to deliver additional Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Proof (MRAP) vehicles to troops in combat. MRAP refers to a family of military vehicles that generally incorporate a "V" shaped hull and armor plating designed to provide protection against mines and IEDs which are responsible for about 70% of U.S. casualties in Iraq. As of May 2007, no Marines had been killed in 300 attacks on MRAPs.

Below is the letter sent by

Representatives Mike Castle (R-DE), Christopher Shays (R-CT), Todd Platts (R-PA), Robert Brady (D-PA), Rush Holt (D-NJ), Jim Marshall (D-GA), Randy Kuhl (R-NY), Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), and Heath Shuler (D-NC).

August 1, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates

Secretary of Defense

The Pentagon

Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to commend your recent efforts to make the Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Proof (MRAP) vehicle the Department of Defense's highest acquisition program priority. As the Department accelerates production of the MRAP,

we encourage you to use this opportunity to improve the efficiency of military spending.

According to government reports, IEDs are responsible for close to 70 percent of American casualties in Iraq. Initial use of the MRAP by the Army and Marines for mine and IED clearance in Iraq demonstrated the vehicle's strong record of survivability. In fact, the Congressional Research Service reports that "as of May 2007, no Marines had been killed in 300 attacks on MRAPs and only 2 Army soldiers had been killed in an attack on an MRAP."

By contrast, HMMWVs, despite initiatives to improve their armor, have continued to be vulnerable to small arms and IED attacks, resulting in a significant number of casualties.

While honest minds will disagree over the future of our military's troop presence in Iraq, Members of Congress are unified in supporting efforts to enhance the security of the U.S. soldiers serving in harm's way. On May 2, 2007, you took an important step towards improving the safety of our troops by declaring the MRAP program to be the highest priority Pentagon acquisition program. More recently, your Department has recognized several impediments to delivering MRAPs in a timely manner and you have acted swiftly to establish the MRAP Task Force to speed production and fielding of the vehicle. As the Department works to marshal the resources necessary to support the MRAP program, we ask that the MRAP Task Force take part in the following initiatives to make certain that our troops receive the equipment they need in the most effective manner possible:

- Direct

the DoD Inspector General to perform an immediate audit of all Pentagon programs on the Government Accountability Office's "high risk" list. Of the top 25 government programs listed by GAO in 2005 as being most prone to waste, fraud, and abuse, DoD is directly involved in fourteen. The Task Force should use any savings identified in this audit to ramp up production of the MRAP.

- Increase

oversight of the MRAP budget to ensure that spending waste does not result as part of the rush to expand the program. According to Task Force Chairman John Young, DoD is compressing the normal contracting process and helping industry bolster production capacity. The Task Force should accelerate efforts to prevent waste and abuse at the same time it speeds up production so as to make certain that DoD and its contractors make the most efficient use of MRAP funding.

- Require

the Task Force to examine other combat vehicles, in addition to the MRAP, which may be effective in executing future missions. Although MRAPs provide enhanced armored protection, some military officials have noted that they may be too large or too unwieldy to operate in certain environments. For instance, concerns have been raised that the MRAP may not be shipboard compatible or that it could face air transportability issues - which would impact on rapid unit deployment during contingency operations.

Thank you for considering these important initiatives and for coordinating the effort to deliver this extremely

important capability to our soldiers. We look forward to your timely response to this inquiry and we hope to work closely with you to improve the safety and security of our brave men and women who are deployed in combat.

Sincerely,

Mike Castle (R-DE)

Christopher Shays (R-CT)

Todd Platts (R-PA)

Robert Brady (D-PA)

Rush Holt (D-NJ)

Jim Marshall (D-GA)

Randy Kuhl (R-NY)

Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO)

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