

JANUARY 29, 2004

SCHAKOWSKY EXPRESSES CONCERN FOR SAFETY OF ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD AND ARMY RESERVISTS SERVING IN IRAQ

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In a letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky expressed concern that Illinois Guardsmen and Reservists serving in Iraq *"are not receiving the same modern military equipment and training as active-duty personnel, that they are being treated as second class citizens."*

□ She called on Secretary Rumsfeld to take steps to replace *"all out-dated equipment currently in use in Iraq with modern forms of protection."*

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Schakowsky pointed to an incident on November 2, 2003 where *"an Illinois National Guard Chinook helicopter was downed in one of the bloodiest episodes of the ongoing war in Iraq.□ The helicopter was not equipped with the latest automatic anti-missile blocking system.□ It is my understanding that only 6 of the 14 National Guard helicopters from Illinois had operable anti-missile systems when they arrived in Iraq."*

Schakowsky added that that according the Enlisted Association of the National Guard, *"the Army National Guard lacked \$11 billion,"*

and

"nearly 11,000 Humvees, 20,000 radios, 156,000 night-vision goggles, and 148 Black Hawk helicopters that are required to meet modernization requirements."

"I am troubled to hear that much of the equipment our soldiers in National Guard and Reserve units do receive is outmoded.□ These men and women are being sent into the field with Vietnam-era rifles, fewer bulletproof vests, outdated radios and unarmored Humvees," Schakowsky said.

Below is the full text of Schakowsky's letter to Secretary Rumsfeld:

January 29, 2004

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary
United States Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

I am writing to you today out of concern for the safety of men and women from Illinois serving in Iraq as members of the Army National Guard and the United States Army Reserves. I have written to you before about my concerns that some of our troops in Iraq are being sent into the field without modern, lifesaving military equipment. I am further disturbed by continuing reports that the men and women in the Army National Guard and the United States Reserves are not receiving the same modern military equipment and training as active-duty personnel, that they are being treated as second class citizens.

On November 2, 2003 an Illinois National Guard Chinook helicopter was downed in one of the bloodiest episodes of the ongoing war in Iraq. The helicopter was not equipped with the latest automatic anti-missile blocking system. It is my understanding that only 6 of the 14 National Guard helicopters from Illinois had operable anti-missile systems when they arrived in Iraq.

According to the Enlisted Association of the National Guard, as of November 30, 2003, the Army National Guard lacked \$11 billion of the \$40 billion dollars in military equipment and training it needs to go to war. Among the missing crucial equipment were nearly 11,000 Humvees, 20,000 radios, 156,000 night-vision goggles, and 148 Black Hawk helicopters that are required to meet modernization requirements.

Finally, I am troubled to hear that much of the equipment our soldiers in National Guard and Reserve units do receive is outmoded. These men and women are being sent into the field with Vietnam-era rifles, fewer bulletproof vests, outdated radios and unarmored Humvees.

According to your plans for force rotation in Iraq, by late spring nearly 40% of our troops will be members of the National Guard and Reservists. It is unjustifiable not to provide members of the Army National Guard and Reserves with the same level of protection as active-duty troops fighting in the field beside them.

Again, I would like to know what steps you are taking to ensure the safety of all our troops in Iraq by giving them the most up-to-date military equipment. Specifically, I would like to know what steps you have taken to provide for the safety of the Army National Guard and Reserves and to ensure that they are not being provided with inferior equipment. Additionally, I ask that you give me the Department of Defense's timeline for replacing all out-dated equipment currently in use in Iraq with modern forms of

protection.

Again, thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to your response to my questions.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky

Member of Congress