

OCTOBER 21, 2003

SCHAKOWSKY DEMANDS ANSWERS FROM BUSH ADMINISTRATION

PERSONALLY DELIVERS LETTER TO DEFENSE SECRETARY RUMSFELD ON COST OF WAR IN IRAQ, TREATMENT OF U.S. TROOPS AND IRAQI CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today delivered a letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld demanding that the Bush Administration answer questions about the cost of war in Iraq, the treatment of U.S. soldiers in Iraq and the number of Iraqi civilian casualties.

Below is Schakowsky's letter to Secretary Rumsfeld:

October 21, 2003

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary
United States Department of Defense
(Delivered in person)

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with members of Congress today. I would appreciate it if you would provide me with answers to the following questions about our troops, the cost of U.S. military operations in Iraq, and the impact those operations have had on Iraqi civilians.

On October 9, 2003, at the Pease Air National Guard Base in New Hampshire, President Bush said "our coalition acted in one of the swiftest and most humane military campaigns in history." I was confused by that line in his speech because I have been trying for months to receive even an estimate from senior officials in the Bush administration, including you, of the number of Iraqi civilian casualties that resulted from U.S. military action in Iraq. President Bush's statement suggests to me that he has been provided with some of the same information that I am seeking. If you do know the number of Iraqi civilian deaths and injuries that have resulted from U.S. military action--both during and since the end of major conflict operations--I would like you to share those figures with me. If you do not have a clear idea of the number of Iraqi civilians who have been killed or seriously injured by U.S. forces, then it appears that the President's claims about the "humane" nature of the U.S. military campaign in Iraq may be unsubstantiated.

I am also concerned about the effects of the Administration's poor planning for the Iraq war. It has cost us dearly in U.S. lives and in taxpayer dollars. I opposed

the supplemental appropriations bill that was passed by the House of Representatives last week in large part because I was informed that the Defense Department does not need a substantial amount of the funds provided by the bill. According to the Congressional Research Service (see attached CRS memorandum: Availability of Army Funds without Immediate Supplemental Appropriations), "Available Military Personnel funding should last until roughly the end of May and into the beginning of June. Available operation and maintenance funding should last roughly through the end of March and into the beginning of April." The Congress has already passed the supplemental appropriations bill over significant opposition from those of us who do not support unnecessary spending. However, I would still like to know why the Administration has stated that the military portion of the bill is needed when, clearly, it is not.

If you disagree with the assessment made by CRS, I would like to have a detailed explanation of the basis for that disagreement.

In addition, I would like to know when the Defense Department will certify to the Congress that it has provided our troops with the critical, lifesaving items they currently do not have in sufficient numbers. Some of those items include appropriate body armor that more than forty thousand of our troops currently lack, electronic jammers to prevent the detonation of roadside explosive devices that are used to target Americans in Iraq, and such commonsense necessities as sunscreen and sanitary napkins in sufficient quantities.

I would also like you to tell me what you are doing about the need for better health care for our wounded soldiers. I was extremely troubled by the October 17, 2003 UPI story entitled "Sick, wounded U.S. troops held in squalor". According to the article,

"Hundreds of sick and wounded U.S. soldiers including many who served in the Iraq war are languishing in hot cement barracks while they wait -- sometimes for months -- to see doctors. The National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers' living conditions are so substandard, and the medical care so poor, that many of them believe the Army is trying push them out with reduced benefits for their ailments. One document shown to UPI states that no more doctor appointments are available from Oct. 14 through Nov. 11 -- Veterans Day."

The article went on to remind readers that, "in an Oct. 9 speech to National Guard and reserve troops in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Bush said the soldiers had become part of the backbone of the military." I agree with that statement, so I am all the more confused as to why the Administration would treat our brave personnel in such a disrespectful manner. I am aware that additional resources have been sent to Fort Stewart, but for this situation to have arisen in the first place is simply unacceptable.

Finally, Mr. Secretary, I would like you to respond to press reports that U.S.

troops have been ordered to and have purposely destroyed the subsistence crops of Iraqi civilians. I sincerely hope that the destruction of crops upon which Iraqis rely for their survival would not be targets in this war. Surely the use of such techniques will not help America to bolster its already tarnished image in Iraq.

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Sincerely,

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**Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress**