

NOVEMBER 27, 2002

**SCHAKOWSKY SAYS DEFENSE SECRETARY RUMSFELD MUST CERTIFY THAT MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY PROTECTED AGAINST BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL ATTACKS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) called on Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to certify that U.S. military personnel who may be deployed in Iraq are adequately equipped against biological and chemical attacks.□□

Schakowsky, who is a member of the Government Reform National Security Subcommittee, wrote in a letter to the Secretary, "The (Democratic) caucus was presented with information about various pieces of equipment, including 250,000 protective suits that are known to be defective and that were delivered to commanders in the field, but that can no longer be located or recalled by the Department because of flawed inventory controls.□ The caucus also received information regarding existing shortages in other equipment, as well as questionable levels of training to prepare units for possible chemical and biological attacks."

Schakowsky called on the Secretary, prior to the deployment of U.S. forces, to personally certify to congress "that all United States Armed Forces that could be deployed, or are intended to be deployed, against Iraq pursuant to the exercise of authority specified in H.J. Res. 114 have been provided with equipment to protect against chemical and biological attacks in quantities sufficient to meet minimum required levels previously established by the Department of Defense."

Below is the full text of the letter to Secretary Rumsfeld:

*November 27, 2002*

*The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, DC□ 20301*

*Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:*

*I am writing to express my concern that if President Bush decides to deploy U.S. military forces against Iraq, the service men and women who are sent into battle may not be adequately protected against chemical and biological attacks.*

***During a press briefing on October 17, 2002, you discussed several issues that you believe should be considered before U.S. military force is deployed. In the context of sending U.S. Armed Forces to Iraq, you said: "If an engagement is worth doing, then we need to recognize that ultimately lives could be put at risk." You also made this comment:***

***When there's a risk of casualties, that risk should be acknowledged at the outset, rather than allowing the American people or others to think that an engagement can be executed antiseptically.***

***I agree. I believe the American people have a right to know the true risks of any military engagement the President decides to undertake. I am concerned, however, that Pentagon officials may be downplaying the actual risks to our service men and women, particularly with respect to the preparedness of our forces for chemical and biological attacks. On September 18, 2002, for example, General Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified before the Armed Services Committee. He was asked whether forces that would be deployed against Iraq are prepared to handle potential chemical and biological attacks by Iraqi forces. In response, he made this assertion: "Obviously our forces prepare for that, they train for that, and they would be ready to deal with that type of environment."***

***On October 8, 2002, however, the House Democratic Caucus received a briefing by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) and was provided with testimony from the Defense Department Inspector General (IG) regarding this issue. The caucus was presented with information about various pieces of equipment, including 250,000 protective suits that are known to be defective and that were delivered to commanders in the field, but that can no longer be located or recalled by the Department because of flawed inventory controls. The caucus also received information regarding existing shortages in other equipment, as well as questionable levels of training to prepare units for possible chemical and biological attacks. Although this unclassified information was extremely troubling, the classified information provided by GAO and the IG was even more disturbing, especially in light of the Defense Department's previous expressions of confidence on this issue.***

***As you know, during the Gulf War, we gained a great deal of intelligence about Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological capabilities. His resources, combined with his demonstrated penchant for using them, formed the basis for Security Council resolutions that have governed Iraq ever since. Indeed, the threat of Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological arsenals has been cited as one of the primary and most urgent reasons for taking military action against Iraq.***

***Our experience during the Gulf War, however, also exposed our own military's limitations in facing this type of threat. Our service members did not have enough protective gear, such as suits and masks. They had inadequate equipment to detect the release of deadly agents. And as thousands of veterans who continue to experience the full range of Gulf War Illnesses can attest, our service members were ill-prepared for the***

*medical regimens they were rushed to implement. During the Gulf War, we were fortunate that Iraq did not use its chemical or biological arsenals because our forces were not ready.*

*According to GAO and the IG, the military's progress since the Gulf War in preparing our troops for these threats has not occurred as rapidly as necessary. For this reason, and because this issue is critical to hundreds of thousands of service members, their families, and the American public, I ask that prior to the deployment of U.S. forces, you personally make the following certification to Congress:*

*I, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, certify that all United States Armed Forces that could be deployed, or are intended to be deployed, against Iraq pursuant to the exercise of authority specified in H.J. Res. 114 have been provided with equipment to protect against chemical and biological attacks in quantities sufficient to meet minimum required levels previously established by the Department of Defense.*

*As you can see, this certification addresses only equipment. It does not deal with training deficiencies or medical concerns that conceivably are equally important. In addition, I recognize the obvious concern with revealing to our adversaries potential vulnerabilities with specific units or commands, so this certification does not require you to reveal any classified information with respect to specific vulnerabilities of specific units. If our forces are in fact "ready to deal with that type of environment," as Chairman Myers asserted, you should have no difficulty certifying that our troops possess minimum established levels of protective equipment.*

*If you cannot in good conscience make this certification, however, I believe the American people are entitled to know this information, as you explained during the press briefing in October.*

*I respectfully request that you provide a response to this request by December 15, 2002, and I appreciate your assistance in this matter.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress*