



NEWS RELEASE



Congressman Robin Hayes 8th District, North Carolina

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Congressman Robin Hayes Urges Extra Protection for U.S. Troops Stationed in Afghanistan and Pakistan *Threat of Nuclear War Between Pakistan and India Creating New Risks for U.S. Troops in Operation Enduring Freedom*

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Robin Hayes (NC-8) today contacted U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld urging him to adequately address the additional risks now facing U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Tensions are at an all-time high between Pakistan and India, both nuclear powers, with the threat of nuclear war in the region growing.

Hayes traveled to Afghanistan to review U.S. efforts in March and has been in frequent contact with Fort Bragg officials for *Operation Enduring Freedom* updates. Hayes last toured Fort Bragg in March, with President Bush and visited Pope in April. With the addition of the 3,000 82nd Airborne troops just deployed, North Carolina will have more troops participating in Operation Enduring Freedom than any other state. Many of these troops are from Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, which Hayes represents.

“There is a growing threat of open warfare between Pakistan and India – two nations that have aggressively touted their nuclear capabilities,” said Hayes. **“Reports of Pakistani troop movements away from Afghanistan could have significant effects on U.S. efforts to root out al Qaeda and Taliban remnants that have fled across the border. A U.S. intelligence assessment, completed last week, estimated that a nuclear war between Pakistan and India could result in as many as 12 million people killed and 7 million injured in just the initial minutes. Millions of additional casualties could result from related firestorms and longer-term consequences.**

“I have contacted Secretary Rumsfeld to assess the force protection measures currently in place for our troops, and analyze what more we need to provide for their safety should nuclear hostilities occur. This is a very tense time and I am greatly concerned that we give the necessary and adequate attention to protecting U.S. military personnel in the region. Numerous members of the 18th Airborne Corps including Afghanistan Joint Task Force Commander Lt. General Dan McNeill, as well as other individuals from Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, have been sent to this region. We must provide them, and all of our U.S. military personnel, the adequate safeguards and protection to do their job.

“These brave men and women are already in harms way as they go after terrorists. We must do everything we can to protect them from this new threat.”

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