

FACTS ABOUT BIPARTISAN WEBB-HAGEL DWELL TIME AMENDMENT

September 19, 2007

TITLE

An amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 to specify minimum periods between deployments of units and members of the Armed Forces deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

SUMMARY & UPDATED LANGUAGE

The Amendment states that if a unit or a member of a regular component of the Armed Forces deploys to Iraq or Afghanistan, when their deployment ends they will have **at least the same time at home before they are redeployed**. No unit or member of a Reserve component, including the National Guard, could be redeployed to Iraq or Afghanistan within three years of their previous deployment.

The Amendment includes **fair and reasonable waivers**. In event of an operational emergency posing a vital threat to national security interests, the President may waive the amendment's limitations by certifying to Congress that the deployment of the unit or member is necessary. The military departments also are provided waiver authority for individual volunteers who seek to redeploy before the expiration of the mandated time between deployments.

Updated language per conversation with Sec. Gates: After a conversation with Secretary of Defense Gates this week, Senator Webb accommodated his concerns with implementation by adding a 120-day enactment period. This will allow time for the Pentagon to plan, organize, and implement the new rotation policies. Previously, the amendment would have been effective immediately upon passage of the National Defense Authorization Act.

The amendment also was modified to provide an **exemption for Special Operations Forces**. This exemption recognizes the often erratic nature of their rotation cycles, unique operations, and special requirements

RATIONALE

After four and a half years of combat operations, as the political debate continues we must provide our troops and their families with a more predictable operational tempo, with adequate time at home between deployments.

We are burning out our ground forces. We are seeing this in falling retention of experienced combat veterans, soldiers and Marines being recalled to active duty from the Individual Ready Reserve, and an increase in mental health issues arising from multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

CO-SPONSORS, SUPPORTERS

The amendment had 36 cosponsors when it was originally introduced in July. A total of 56 Senators voted for its passage, including 7 Republicans. Momentum continues to build.

Organizational Support and others:

- Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and its 368,000 members [*“If we are not better stewards of our troops and their families in the future than we have been in the recent past, MOAA believes strongly that we will be putting the all-volunteer force at unacceptable military risk.”* Vice Admiral Norbert R. Ryan, Jr, USN (Ret.), president.]
- National Military Families Association
- Veterans for America
- VoteVets.org
- Major General Robert B. Newman Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia

KEY POINTS MADE IN REMARKS BY SENATORS WEBB & HAGEL

- Regardless of your politics—whether you want to see troop withdrawal tomorrow or in years from now—**this is about providing a safety net** for our men and women in uniform. Period.
- After 4 ½ years of occupying Iraq, **it is time for the availability of troops to dictate the operational tempo, and not the other way around.** We need to be proper stewards of our men and women in uniform. We cannot continue to burn out our troops in this fashion.
- Extended, high-tempo deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan have adversely affected the readiness of Army and Marine Corps units. Their capability to respond quickly to other crises or contingencies around the world has been jeopardized.
- **The amendment’s 1:1 deployment-to-dwell ratio for active units and members is a minimum floor.** DOD’s historic policy and current goal is a ratio of 1:2. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has specifically reiterated this goal. Army units today deploy on a 0.75:1 ratio, 15 months with 12 months at home. It is not unusual for Marines also to have less time at home than the length of their last deployment. By contrast, the British units deployed to Iraq have enjoyed a 4:1 ratio – six months in Iraq and two years at home.
- **The authority vested in the Congress by the Constitution is clear.** Article One, Section 8 of the Constitution vests Congress with the power to “make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces.” There is extensive legislative precedent for Congress to act to protect the welfare of our troops. In 1951, for example, at the height of the Korean War, Congress mandated that all personnel must receive full training for no less than 120 days before being deployed.
- **In response to Friday’s remarks by Secretary Gates and General Pace:** It is to be fully expected that the administration would oppose this amendment. The intention of the amendment is to rectify an inequity brought about by administration policies. Senator Webb had a personal discussion with Secretary Gates on Wednesday and modified the amendment to address his major concerns. It is an appropriate area for Congress to act, and we stand by the amendment.