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STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DUNCAN HUNTER CHAIRMAN, MILITARY PROCUREMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE HEARING

April 9, 1997

This afternoon we are going to explore a topic that for some reason this committee has not deliberated in an open forum prior to today—unmanned aerial vehicles, UAVs. It seems that over the last twenty years we have spent billions of dollars developing a variety of these platforms, but, for some unknown reason, there are precious few assets available in the inventory.

I don't know whether it's been changes in requirements, changes in management organizations, changes in acquisition philosophies, changes in resource allocation, or a combination of these factors that has plagued the fielding of operationally effective UAVs over the years. All I know is that we put a man on the moon within a decade from the time we undertook this endeavor until it actually happened; yet as my colleagues are about to find out from our CRS and GAO briefers, we haven't been able to put more than a few UAVs into the hands of the warfighters after nearly two decades of trying to do so!

To exemplify our frustration with UAV development and management, let me quote from the report that accompanied the House Defense Authorization Bill for FY 97:

“The committee has been and continues to be concerned about the Department's UAV program because of the lack of validated requirements; the frequency with which these 'requirements' change; the lack of substantive analysis or the failure to provide the analysis, if it exists, to the Congress; the affordability of the UAV development programs within the context of the Department's overall airborne reconnaissance program; and the claims made by the Department regarding 'joint' programs versus the reality of very different requirements for those programs.”

Pretty strong words, I'd say, and although there may a bit of hyperbole expressed, by and large, they are probably justified. Perhaps our friends in the Pentagon may disagree with these views, but with so many issues on the table, I felt the need to have a UAV hearing this year.

We are pleased to have representatives from each of the services with us to discuss their UAV requirements; a representative from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to speak to these requirements from the Joint Requirements Oversight Council's perspective; and the Director of the Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office—DARO—who is charged with acquiring and fielding UAVs to meet the requirements of the services and the regional Commanders-in-Chief.

From the Joint Chiefs of Staff we have:

Vice Admiral Dennis C. Blair
Director, Joint Staff

Representing the services we have:

Lt Gen Jay M. Garner
Assistant Vice Chief of Staff
United States Army

Vice Admiral Donald L. Pilling
Deputy Chief of Naval Operations
Resources, Warfare Requirements, and Assessments

Lt Gen Brett M. Dula
Vice Commander
Air Combat Command

Lt Gen Paul K. Van Riper
Commanding General
Marine Corps Combat Development Command

And, from the DARO we have its Director

Maj Gen Kenneth Israel

Gentlemen, we thank you all for being here, and we expect you to share with us your candid views on the subject. However, before we receive your testimony I've asked representatives from the General Accounting Office and the Congressional Research Service to provide us a background briefing on UAVs. To do this, we are pleased to have:

Mr. Richard A. Best, Jr.
Analyst in National Defense
Congressional Research Service

and

Mr. Louis J. Rodrigues
Director, Defense Acquisition Issues
U.S. General Accounting Office,

who is accompanied by his assistant Director, Mr. Charles Ward.

Gentlemen, we also want to extend to you our thanks for coming today, and we look forward to your briefing. I know it will be most informative, if not eye-opening! I note that GAO has issued eleven reports on UAVs since 1982, and none of them is by any means flattering. Let me take a moment just to read a few of the titles, and I think everyone will get my point:

The Army's RPV Shows Good Potential, But Faces a Lengthy Development Program (Feb. 26, 1982).

AQUILA Remotely Piloted Vehicle: Its Potential Battlefield Contribution Still in Doubt (Oct. 26, 1987).

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES: Realistic Testing Needed Before Production of Short Range System (Sept. 28, 1990)

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES: Medium Range System Components Do Not Fit (Mar. 25, 1991)

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES: More Testing Needed Before Production of Short-Range System (Sept. 4, 1992)

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES: Performance of Short-Range System in Question (Dec. 15, 1993)

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES: No More Hunter Systems Should be Bought Until Problems are Fixed (Mar. 1, 1995)

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES: Maneuver System Schedule Includes Unnecessary Risk (Sept. 15, 1995)

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES: Hunter System is not Appropriate For Navy Fleet Use (Dec. 1, 1995)