



**Senator Feinstein Votes to Confirm
Dr. Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense**

December 6, 2006

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today voted to confirm Dr. Robert Gates as the next Secretary of Defense. The following is the statement she submitted into the Congressional record today in support of his nomination:

“Mr. President, I rise today in support of the nomination of Robert Gates to succeed Donald Rumsfeld as the next Secretary of Defense.

I applaud the Senate Armed Services Committee and Senators Warner and Levin for moving this nomination to the Floor in a prompt but thoughtful manner.

I was heartened to see the forthrightness and candidness employed by Dr. Gates at his confirmation hearing yesterday.

He fully admitted the need for a ‘change of approach’ in Iraq, stating his view that we are not currently winning the war and that the ‘status quo’ is unacceptable.

Additionally, he expressed a willingness to use ‘fresh eyes’ in looking for solutions and promised to keep all options on the table.

He committed to cooperating with the Congress in pursuing its oversight responsibilities and said he would always speak boldly and candidly about what he believed.

Finally, Dr. Gates talked about the complexities of the situation in Iraq, acknowledging that a number of major mistakes had been made, including:

- **The lack of appreciation for how ‘broken’ Iraq was economically, socially, and politically, and the costs associated when we invaded.**

- **The problems created by the de-mobilization of the Iraqi Army and the role that our de-Baathification policy played in stoking the current insurgency.**

It is my sincere hope that Dr. Gates' nomination signals that the Administration intends to pursue a new direction in Iraq, and the Middle East region as a whole. The President should see the strong support for Dr. Gates as a call from Congress for moving away from the 'stay the course' strategy he has pursued.

I hope that Dr. Gates will work with Congress to establish a clear-eyed and pragmatic approach toward our nation's defense policy and seek to restore the morale of our military.

I hope Dr. Gates will be open to dissenting views and allow the military personnel around him to share unvarnished, independent advice.

Dr. Gates is a well-qualified candidate for this critical position. His service at the top levels of the CIA and the National Security Council has provided close insights into the Pentagon's operations and policies.

As a former member of the Iraq Study Group (ISG), Dr. Gates understands the complex challenges our nation faces. He will be in a unique position to implement the recommendations in the ISG report, and other options for pursuing a new strategy.

It is clear to me that during the recent midterm elections the American people voiced their disapproval with this Administration's Iraq policies and voted for a change of course.

And the time for changing the course is now.

The Iraq War has now lasted longer than the United States involvement in World War II. More than 2,900 troops have been killed since March 19, 2003. More than 3,000 Iraqis are being killed in sectarian violence every month.

Today our military is stretched thin and its readiness diminished. Some of our troops are now on their third and fourth rotations. And, over in Iraq and Afghanistan, our military's equipment is wearing out or being destroyed at a cost of nearly \$20 billion a year.

Ultimately, this war can only be won politically.

Our nation must make it clear to the Iraqi government that this is not an open-ended commitment. Iraqis must step forward and take responsibility for their own security. Only they can make their country a stable state.

The Administration's war planning was shortsighted and ill-conceived. By failing to provide adequate troops to secure Iraq, its infrastructure, its weapons depots, and its streets, this Administration placed the entire mission in Iraq in jeopardy.

Dr. Gates has stated that he intends to improve the Department of Defense's planning efforts in regards to post-combat operations – a capability sorely missing from the current leadership.

I am also encouraged by Dr. Gates apparent willingness to involve Iran and Syria in diplomatic dialogue – a stark contrast from the Bush Administration's current policy.

I hope that President Bush will accept the advice of the Iraq Study Group and Dr. Gates to engage in diplomacy to solve this crisis.

Additionally, Dr. Gates has expressed concerns regarding the Pentagon's continued expansion of intelligence activities since the September 11th, 2001 attacks.

I share these concerns and look forward to working with Dr. Gates and Ambassador Negroponte to ensure that there is an appropriate and transparent division of responsibilities between military and civilian intelligence agencies.

Fifteen years ago, Dr. Gates came before the Senate as President George H.W. Bush's nominee to become the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI).

During four days of hearings, a number of questions were raised regarding his involvement and knowledge of the Iran-Contra scandal. In addition, allegations were aired regarding the manipulation of intelligence for political purposes.

These are serious concerns.

But what is critical to me today is that he shows an independent mind and willingness to eschew ideology and partisanship to do what is best for our men and women in uniform.

It is clearly time for instituting new leadership at the Pentagon – something I first called for almost a year ago. But such a change will only matter if the President himself is willing to pursue a difference course.

I am looking forward to working with Dr. Gates on defense matters, to address the needs of our troops and their families, and to finally bring about a change in our Iraq policy – certainly the time is far past due.

Thank you.

And I yield the floor.”

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