



Military Families Speak Out  
Alaska Chapter

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The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-0202

October 23, 2006

Re: Your Press Release of October 3, 2006 re: 172nd Stryker Brigade

Dear Senator Murkowski,

We are disappointed by your response on October 3<sup>rd</sup> to the Pentagon's announcement that the redeployment of 172nd Stryker Brigade will not be extended past 120 days. To publicly declare your gratitude to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in your press release, without acknowledging the reality of the situation in Baghdad, relegates the truth that Americans need to hear to the background in exchange for perceptions of progress and success.

There is nothing yet to cheer about in the announcement that the Stryker Brigade will be home in December. In the two weeks since your press release, the 172nd has lost two more soldiers. And until they actually arrive home, we will have to live with the frightful possibility that our loved one may not make it home at all or might return with disastrous life long wounds.

We write not about the 172nd Stryker Brigade alone, but about all of our troops. When the Secretary of Defense "promises" to bring home one unit from Iraq, he is also promising to deploy another to replace them. A few weeks ago, 3,500 soldiers of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division left Fort Richardson in preparation for their one year deployment in Iraq. Last week, almost 600 soldiers from the Alaska National Guard departed for Iraq, the largest such deployment since World II. And of course, beyond Alaska is the extended deployment of the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division announced last month.

In response to our letter urging you to call for Mr. Rumsfeld's resignation, your spokesman, Kevin Sweeney, explained that "replacing Rumsfeld at this time is not going to end the war or end the debate." We agree that an end to the war and a real debate about how to bring stability to Iraq will not be found in such a simple act, but the process of reversing over three years of failure must start somewhere.

The current the leadership in the Pentagon is too willing to use, re-use and extend our troops without regard for their physical and mental health. These actions contradict the frequent reports to the nation about "progress" in Iraq. How can the problems there be solved if we allow the truth to be masked under political cosmetics for the sake of maintaining public support for the president's "stay the course" message? We believe America can do better by displaying the courage to admit to our mistakes, which is vital to finding a path to ending the war and creating the hopes for long term peace in Iraq.

The issue we raised about the details about Iraqi civilian casualties in Baghdad remains a concern. The discrepancies seem more relevant considering the recent study released by Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, reported on this month in the British medical journal Lancet, indicating upwards of 400,000 innocent people – Iraqi children, women and men – have been killed since the invasion in 2003. Selectively choosing to ignore Iraqi deaths from car bombs and mortar attacks is an example of the dishonesty that can only be intended to reassure the American people that progress is being made. It seems that Donald Rumsfeld presented those statistics to us, the families of the 172nd, for that very reason.

We trust that you are still investigating this issue. We will continue to work to bring the truth to the American people. It is the only way to honor the efforts and dedication of America's soldiers in Iraq and to begin the work necessary to bring them home where they belong. We know you recognize the importance of the truth on such important matters and we look forward to your reply.

Respectfully

Military Family members of Alaska and/or 172nd Stryker Brigade

Rich Moniak, Juneau, Alaska  
Jennifer Davis, Chugiak, Alaska  
Malinda Mills, Fort Wainwright, Alaska  
Tamara Bell, Fairbanks, Alaska  
Brandi Shorpshire, North Pole, Alaska  
Alice Nesdahl, Fairbanks, Alaska  
Suzanne Hickman, Valdez Alaska  
Judy Macnak, Juneau, Alaska  
Denny Wallace, Valdez, Alaska  
Anjela Johnston, Juneau, Alaska  
Jeanne Olson, North Pole, Alaska  
Laurie Loving, Davis CA  
Russell Loving, Davis CA  
Tanya Radic, Croass Plains, TN  
Kathy Knowles, Sherwood, IL  
Barbara Orr, St. Petersburg, FL  
Barbara O'Connor, New Milford, NJ  
Leah Martin, Puyallup, WA  
Lynne Guldager, Marshalltown, IA  
Dania Hendricks, San Antonio, TX  
Gloria Guldager, Glenside, PA  
Anonymously, wife of a 172nd brigade soldier  
Anonymously, sister of a 172nd brigade soldier