

US House of Representatives approves FY09 Defense Authorization Bill

Congressman Duncan Hunter has been the bane of the life of U K defence exporters. He pushed a protectionist agenda when chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and anglo-US unclassified defence trade relations were kept on a more or less even keel as a result of the sterling efforts of Senator John Warner.

The U.S. House of Representatives has just amended and approved S. 3001, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, by a vote of 392 to 39.

Current Democrat Chairman Ike Skelton, who was minority leader for many years while this was going on, and who in his public utterances describes the failed Republican Presidential candidate as a friend, made the following comments:

"I thank my House colleagues for their bipartisan support of the defense authorization bill. This bill takes care of our nation's defense priorities by restoring military readiness, providing our forces with the means to protect the American people, and demonstrating our commitment to service members and their families.

"U.S. military readiness has been strained by two wars, and the bill provides critical funding to repair and replace equipment, to purchase equipment for the National Guard and Reserve, and for construction and repair of defense facilities, such as military barracks.

"To help manage demands placed on our service members by our military obligations, the agreement increases the size of the military by 7,000 soldiers, 5,000 Marines, 1,023 sailors, and by 450 airmen. In support of our service members and their families, this bill provides a much-needed 3.9 percent pay increase and prohibits increases in health care fees.

"This defense authorization bill also sets important policy concerning ongoing operations in Afghanistan in Iraq. The bill includes provisions to better coordinate military operations in Afghanistan and to enhance security and stability in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. The bill also places restrictions on the use of training and reconstruction funds in Iraq and requires the Defense Department to report to Congress on any Status of Forces Agreements between the U.S. and Iraq."

Congressman Hunter will retire at the November Congressional elections.