

June 24, 2009

Akin Statement on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO), Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Expeditionary Forces, today released the following prepared remarks for House consideration of H.R. 2647, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010:

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise in support of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010. As ranking member of the Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee, I applaud the efforts of Chairman Taylor and his staff, who have done an excellent job of meeting the needs of our sailors, aviators, and marines.

"With respect to aviation, the bill takes an important step toward addressing the Navy's strike-fighter shortfall. The Navy completed a study required in last year's bill to evaluate the potential benefits of a multiyear procurement for the F/A-18 Super Hornet, which is the only 'hot' production line we have for strike fighters for the Navy. Unfortunately, the Secretary of Defense refused to allow the report to be submitted to Congress. In the absence of any analysis of this issue from the Department, the Committee used its own judgment and included a multi-year authority for the Super Hornet. We also provide sufficient long-lead funding to enable the Navy to execute this multiyear contract. I believe this is imperative, especially as the Navy continues to find more areas of concern on the legacy fleet that may make it challenging to extend the service life of these aircraft. I want to thank Chairman Taylor for working with me on this issue.

"For the Marine Corps, this bill fully funds the Marine's Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle program, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAP's), and all of the items on their unfunded requirements.

"Despite the fact that the Department of Defense refused to provide the 30-year shipbuilding program required by law, which made this committee's work difficult, the bill largely supports the President's budget request in this area. At the full committee, Representative Conaway and I, along with Chairman Taylor, introduced an amendment that would put some teeth into the changes made to the Littoral Combat Ship program cost cap. The Navy needs to know that we are serious about controlling costs and do not adjust cost caps lightly.

"The main concern I have with this bill, does not fall under the Seapower Subcommittee, but I must mention it. Cutting missile defense by \$1.2 billion makes no sense, particularly when North Korea and Iran are both working on nuclear weapons and long range missiles. A cut of this magnitude is simply unacceptable.

"I also continue to have one other, overarching concern—we are not investing enough in the future of our military. The topline provided by the Administration, and frankly, by this Congress, is too low. While we seem to be throwing money at every other problem under the sun, we are tightening our belts on defense. This makes no sense. But again, this is a good bill overall and Chairman Skelton has done his best within these constraints.

"Finally, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to give my best wishes to our former Ranking Member. John McHugh has a fine record in this institution and I know he will continue to serve and fight for the men and women in uniform. Nevertheless, he will be missed on this committee.

"Mr. Chairman, I ask my colleagues to support this bill and yield the balance of my time."