

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, March 2, 2007

Slaughter Calls for Removal of Army Official as Head of Walter Reed

Recent Report Shows Lt. Gen. Kevin C. Kiley Failed to Prevent Deterioration of Hospital's Outpatient Facilities

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates strongly urging him to remove Lt. Gen. Kevin C. Kiley as the temporary head of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

"The Department of Defense needs to make a choice: does it care about our wounded veterans, or does it care about public relations?" Rep. Slaughter said today. **"While I was glad to see that initial steps had been taken to change the leadership at Walter Reed, yesterday's news of Mr. Kiley's appointment was simply baffling. How can a man who stood by for years while American soldiers suffered needlessly be expected to enact real reforms?"**

"The outrage of the American public over the conditions at Walter Reed will not be pacified by simply shuffling the deck," Rep. Slaughter said. "Secretary Gates must immediately remove from command anyone who allowed its facilities to fall into such a state of disrepair."

"Our wounded soldiers deserve nothing less than the best health care this country can provide and the best leadership to ensure they receive that care."

A March 1st article in the *Washington Post* described Lt. Gen. Kiley as having failed to act to correct unacceptable living and health-care standards at Walter Reed's outpatient facilities, despite having been told of problems multiple times over the course of three years.

BACKGROUND:

The story of Lt. Gen. Kiley's appointment follows a February 28th report in the *Air Force Times* stating that soldiers recovering at Walter Reed have been told by officers that they are not to talk to the media, and that CNN and Discovery Channel projects focusing on Defense

Department medical facilities have been put on hold by Pentagon officials.

Commenting on the story, Rep. Slaughter stated that, **"Any attempt to silence the very soldiers who brought their own mistreatment to light, or to hide ongoing abuses from the public eye - if such attempts are occurring - would be morally reprehensible."**

On February 20th, following an initial series of *Washington Post* articles detailing conditions at Walter Reed facilities, Rep. Slaughter sent a letter to Secretary Gates asking him to, **"explain why the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, once the crown-jewel of military medicine, has become a bleak and frustrating place for our wounded soldiers to recover, and what the Army intends to do to restore the integrity of its medical system."**

The complete text of Rep. Slaughter's March 2nd letter to Secretary Gates is included below:

The Honorable Robert Gates

Secretary

U.S. Department of Defense

1000 Defense Pentagon

Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates,

I am writing to express strong concern with the Army's decision to reinstate Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley as Commander of Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

The *Washington Post's* expose on outpatient care at Walter Reed came as a shock to me and many of my constituents. It painted a picture of abhorrent living conditions and a bureaucratic nightmare for our wounded soldiers in outpatient care. The men and women recovering at Walter Reed and the rest of our military hospitals deserve the very best care our nation has to offer. I am embarrassed and ashamed that the Army allowed the conditions at Walter Reed to deteriorate to the level that it did. Our wounded soldiers deserve better.

I am pleased that you recognized the severity of the situation at Walter Reed and moved quickly to address it. However, I am very concerned with the Army's decision to place Lt. Gen. Kevin C. Kiley as the temporary head of Walter Reed. As the *Washington Post* has reported, most of the problems with outpatient care at Walter Reed began during Lt. General Kiley's first

command there in 2003. Lt. Gen. Kiley and his staff were routinely made aware of the deteriorating conditions during his tenure, but chose to do nothing about it. In fact, Lt. Gen. Kiley reportedly dismissed concerns raised by Members of Congress, veterans organizations, and even the spouse of the former Secretary of Defense.

I have very little confidence that Lt. General Kiley, given his track record as previous Commander of Walter Reed, is capable of providing the leadership needed to fix Walter Reed's broken bureaucracy and shoddy infrastructure. I strongly urge the Department of Defense to rescind Lt. General Kiley's assignment, and place Walter Reed in charge of an effective leader.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and I look forward to your prompt response.

###