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Washington DC – Immediately following a Department of Defense briefing for members of the House Armed Services Committee on the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” report released today, Congressman Duncan Hunter, a Marine combat veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, reiterated his opposition to overturning current policy.

“If anything, the survey results make a compelling case for keeping current policy in place and avoiding any type of distraction for our nation’s military and its combat mission,” said Congressman Hunter. “When breaking down the specifics, more respondents answered unfavorably or remain uncertain about a policy change than those who favor repeal.

“Regardless, this does not change the Administration’s position, as evidenced by the criteria and lines of questioning used to reach a predetermined outcome. In this case, Congress must put the opinion of our troops and their families first and this report, despite what its authors and proponents say, leaves me unconvinced that their views were properly and thoroughly evaluated.

“Throughout this debate, the focus has been on what overturning current policy would mean for recruitment, retention and combat readiness. In going over the 100-plus question survey, there are only a handful of questions pertaining to direct combat experience and, even then, the questions do little to provide any insight into how combat units might be impacted. That is a critical distinction that the report fails to identify.

“I am also unconvinced that moving in the direction of a policy change will do anything to save lives in Afghanistan or help achieve mission success any quicker – both of which should be our top priority. Our soldiers and Marines are facing the threat of roadside bombs on almost every patrol, and still taking needless casualties from IEDs. But when the focus should be on reducing IED incidents, something I’ve been pressing the Defense Department and Administration to do for the last two years, there appears to be more interest in pushing a policy change that won’t do anything to protect American troops from IEDs and complete the mission any faster. That’s what really matters to our men and women in uniform.”