

(Washington, D.C.) – Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) returned from a trip, with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, to the Middle East and the United Kingdom. Holt, Chair of the Select Intelligence Oversight Panel and a senior member of the House Committee on Intelligence, and Pelosi visited Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, and the United Kingdom – discussing relations between each nation, security in the Middle East, and joint intelligence capacities. In Iraq, Holt met with members of the New Jersey National Guard and presented them with a “thank you” banner signed by hundreds of New Jersey residents.

A photo of the banner presentation can be found at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rushdholt/3523481102/in/set-72157617908283641/>

“The most meaningful part of this trip was the opportunity to thank the Guardsmen and women for their sense of duty, dedication and competence in completing the mission we assigned to them,” Holt said. “As I told them, our job in Congress is to ensure that they have the tools and wherewithal to complete the mission, as well as to ensure that when go home, if they’re in the National Guard, they can return to their jobs, they can take advantage of the new GI Bill educational benefits, and they can receive the health care veterans benefits they deserve.”

In addition to meeting with American servicemen and women on Sunday, May 10 at Sather Air Base in Baghdad - where Holt presented the banner – Holt and Pelosi met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Parliament Speaker Ayad al-Samarai to discuss key remaining challenges faced by the Iraqi government. The Iraqi officials confirmed their commitment to implement the Status of Forces Agreement, which calls for the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraqi cities by June 30, 2009.

“It is clear that the American combat mission is coming to an end. Everyone we met with understands that,” Holt said. “What is less clear is how ready the Iraqis will be to root out corruption and provide for the security and safety of the citizens. There are still big questions, but I think the reduced American presence will be a positive development and hasten the Iraqi government’s readiness.”

Holt and Pelosi started the trip in Jordan. There, they met with Their Majesties King Abdullah II and Queen Rania of Jordan, observing the 50th anniversary of the establishment of relations between the U.S. and Jordan and discussing combating terrorism and furthering the Middle

East peace process. They also met with Jordanian Senate President Zaid Al-Refai and the Lower House Speaker Abdulhadi Al-Majali to discuss mutual security issues. Pelosi and Holt also toured Prince Faisal Hospital in Rusaifa to examine a new obstetric and neo-natal department funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. With assistance from USAID, Prince Faisal Hospital's newly-renovated delivery ward, obstetrics and pediatrics departments, and operating facilities are now equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment. USAID has been active in Jordan since 1952 and has provided nearly \$250 million in grants to improve the health sector since 1997.

On Friday, Holt and Pelosi traveled to Qatar, visiting the Al Udeid Air Base, home to CENTCOM Forward Headquarters and the Combined Air Operations Center. Holt met with members of the 108<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, which provides inflight refueling to planes in the Iraq and Afghanistan theater.

Holt and Pelosi were briefed by military leaders on operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, and met with members of the Armed Services to express their appreciation. They met on Saturday with Their Highnesses Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani and Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned to discuss U.S-Qatar relations and regional security issues. They thanked the Emir and the Qatari people for the hospitality extended to U.S. forces based in Qatar.

After Iraq, Holt and Pelosi concluded their trip on Monday and Tuesday with a visit to London, where they met with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown to discuss the international economic crisis, climate change, trade, and the United Kingdom's participation in the multinational force in Afghanistan.

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