



National Alliance of Gang Investigators' Associations National Gang News



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PRESS RELEASE

House Passes Thompson's Amendment to Prohibit Gang Members in the Military

Gang members are taking combat training back to the streets, putting law enforcement and civilians at risk

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WASHINGTON - Today, an amendment introduced by Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA) to prohibit gang-activity in the military passed the House as a part of the 2008 Defense Authorization bill. This amendment revises military command policy to prohibit service members from associating with criminal street gangs, whether on duty or at home. Thompson introduced this amendment because a growing number of gang members in the military are returning to the streets armed with combat training, putting local law enforcement at a dangerous disadvantage.

"Gang members with military training present a serious danger to society," said Thompson. "We must work to stop this disturbing trend while it is still emerging."

The FBI has documented members of nearly every major street gang on both domestic and international military installations. The FBI's National Gang Intelligence Center released a report on January 12, 2007 detailed gang-related activity in the U.S. Armed Forces. Findings include:

- Since 2004, the FBI and El Paso Police Department have identified more than 40 military-affiliated gang members stationed at Fort Bliss in Texas.
- Officials at Fort Hood, Texas have identified nearly 40 gang members on base since 2003.
- And nearly 130 gang and extremist groups have been identified at Fort Lewis in Washington in the past 24 months.

"I realize that some gang members join the military to change for the better and those folks would not be affected by this amendment," continued Thompson. "But some are not there to change. This amendment would require the military to identify street gangs so that it can either help to weed gang members out of service or deter them from gang life."

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Thompson's amendment was included in the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 1585) by a voice vote last night. The measure authorizes \$503.8 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense (DoD) and the national security programs of the Department of Energy (DoE), and \$141.8 billion to support ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan during fiscal year 2008.

The Defense Authorization passed the House 329 to 27. This measure was lauded for improving our military readiness, which has been seriously depleted from the multi-year wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It also includes funding to equip our troops with better equipment, armor and training and funding to provide our service members with better healthcare, pay and benefits.

"This is a first step toward stopping gang members from getting in the military in the first place," said Thompson. "I'm also going to keep working with the FBI, the military and local law enforcement to keep these dangerous criminals off our streets."

ONLINE VERSION OF THIS DOCUMENT AVAILABLE:

<http://mikethompson.house.gov/newsroom/index.asp?ID=156>

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