

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) spoke on the House Floor today in support of the McGovern Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:

"I support this amendment. In 2001, in response to the attacks of 9/11, the United States began a war in Afghanistan that targeted Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban, which provided bin Laden with sanctuary and aid. I supported this effort at the time. We have been pursuing this conflict for nearly a decade. The death of Osama bin Laden was a landmark moment in our ongoing struggle to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat the terrorist networks that intend to do Americans harm, and that struggle has not ended with bin Laden's death.

"But his death is a moment for reflection on that struggle, and how we can best equip ourselves to win it. Many of the terrorists against which we are fighting are no longer located in Afghanistan but are in disparate locations, from Yemen to Somalia to Southeast Asia. And Bin Laden was found in Pakistan.

"I support this amendment because it focuses us on adjusting to a world of changing threats. It is essential that we fight the smartest war possible against terrorists—but it is fair to ask how a massive troop presence in Afghanistan continues to help us accomplish that goal. We must plan to transfer responsibility for security in Afghanistan to the Afghan people and government. And it is important to make an assessment of how that can best be done.

"Therefore, this amendment requires a National Intelligence Estimate on al-Qaeda's current leadership, locations, and capabilities. It requires the President to convey to Congress how he intends to meet the goal he stated in December 2009 of a transition for lead security responsibility to the Afghans, where it belongs. It also asks the President to clarify plans for advancing a political solution in Afghanistan – which all our military leaders agree is the solution. Finally, nothing in this amendment limits or prohibits the president's authority to attack al-Qaeda or gather or share intelligence. Nor does it require the administration to modify its military strategy – as it should not.

"This amendment helps us meet our shared goal of defeating the terrorists who wish us harm. I have no doubt that President Obama and every Member of this House believes that their very first duty is to keep our nation safe. We must constantly challenge one another and our nation to

fight smarter and harder, to ensure victory in this broader struggle. So I urge my colleagues to join me in voting yes."