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ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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The Honorable John Warner
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
225 Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of October 7, 2005, concerning the potential effect of Department of Interior-administered oil and gas leasing on military training and readiness in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico. The Department of Defense (DoD) fully supports the national goal of exploration and development of our nation's offshore oil and gas resources. The DoD, the Department of the Interior, and affected states have worked together successfully for many years to ensure unrestricted access to critical military testing and training areas, while also enabling oil and gas exploration in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

DoD conducts essential military testing and training in many of the 26 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) planning areas. Prior analysis and existing agreements with Interior recognize that areas east of the 86° 41' line in the Gulf of Mexico (commonly know as the "Military Mission Line") are especially critical to DoD due to the number and diversity of military testing and training activities conducted there now, and those planned for the future. In those areas east of the Military Mission Line, drilling structures and associated development would be incompatible with military activities, such as missile flights, low-flying drone aircraft, weapons testing, and training.

As the planning process for Interior's new 5-year OCS oil and gas leasing program proceeds, DoD will continue both to evaluate its military requirements and to work with Interior to ensure the 2007-2012 oil and gas program, and any future lease sales resulting from it, strike the proper balance between our nation's energy and national security goals.

Sincerely,

cc:

The Honorable Carl Levin
Ranking Member

