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"I am honored to have the opportunity to travel to Iraq, and to give my deep thanks in person to the women and men who admirably serve in our nation's armed forces," said Congressman Childers. "Being on Iraqi soil has made me appreciate to an even greater extent the incredible job our troops and military leaders are doing overseas. Our soldiers' tireless efforts to protect our freedoms and the principles upon which this great nation was founded should be recognized this Fourth of July as we celebrate our independence.

"I feel especially privileged to have the chance to say thank you to our soldiers from the First Congressional District on behalf of the more than 700,000 Northeast Mississippians I represent. I am looking forward to returning home to Mississippi this week with a greater and more informed understanding of our government's national security measures and the fine work of our troops to carry out these efforts."

Congressman Childers held a press conference call this afternoon to inform members of the Northeast Mississippi media about the day's activities and the significance of his travels. He spent his first day in the Middle East attending several national security, training, and economic briefings at the U.S. Embassy in Iraq. The Congressman had lunch and dinner with soldiers from Mississippi's First Congressional District, and also visited a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle facility, which uses MRAPs manufactured in West Point, Miss.

The primary purpose of the Congressman's trip is to receive first hand operational assessments of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. An equally important objective of the trip is to speak with soldiers from Northeast Mississippi and learn more about their concerns and the issues that are of importance to them.

During his first month in the House of Representatives, Congressman Childers has voted on several measures that would improve important services to both active military personnel and veterans. On June 19, he voted in favor of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008 to fully fund U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. The measure includes a landmark expansion of G.I. benefits.

The Congressman is also a co-sponsor of the Rural Veterans Services Outreach and Training Act (H.R. 3008), which provides grants to state departments of Veterans Affairs to improve veteran outreach and assistance. Recently, Congressman Childers helped pass the National Guard and Reservists Debt Act of 2008 (H.R. 4044) to amend federal bankruptcy law so that National Guard and Reserve members are better able to recover from financial difficulty.

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