

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates Statement on Death of Rep. Murtha:

I was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Jack Murtha. America has lost a true patriot who served his country faithfully first in uniform as a decorated combat Marine, and then as an elected representative.

I've known Jack and worked with him for more than two decades, starting back in the Reagan administration when I was at CIA. I will always remember and be grateful for Congressman Murtha's personal efforts on behalf of the Afghan resistance fighting the Soviets - efforts that helped bring about the end of the Cold War.

In our dealings over the years, Jack and I did not always agree, but I always respected his candor, and knew that he cared deeply about the men and women of America's military and intelligence community. My condolences to Joyce and the rest of the Murtha family.