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Contact: Kennedy - David Smith
(202) 224-2633
Romney – Shawn Feddeman
(617) 725-4025
Markey –Mark Bayer
(202) 225-2836

KENNEDY, ROMNEY, MARKEY, MEET WITH ARMY LEADERS AT FORT
BELVOIR IN SUPPORT OF NATICK SOLDIER SYSTEMS CENTER

Washington, D.C., November 10, 2004 – Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Governor Mitt Romney, and U.S. Representative Ed Markey met today in Virginia with the commander of the Army Materiel Command, at Fort Belvoir, to discuss the vital role of the Soldier Systems Center at Natick in protecting the nation’s troops in battle. The high-level delegation from Massachusetts met with General Benjamin Griffin, who is the incoming Commander of the Army Materiel Command, which oversees Natick.

Kennedy, Romney, and Markey highlighted the importance of Natick’s ties to the surrounding high-tech community in its successful research, development and field integration of its state-of-the-art soldier systems. The Natick Center works closely with local universities, research centers, teaching hospitals and industry in the region, and has won the Army’s 2004 Small Research and Development Laboratory of the Year Award for three of the past four years.

“In the war on terrorism, it is often the individual soldier who is the key to success,” Senator Kennedy said. “The Natick Center provides the best modern equipment to our troops, and its success is heavily dependent on the high-tech expertise readily available in Massachusetts. The Army recognizes Natick’s contributions, and is very supportive of the work of the Systems Center.”

“Massachusetts has a unique juxtaposition of the capabilities needed to do advanced research and development – medical, high tech, nanotechnology and textiles,” said Governor Romney. “Natick’s mission in the post 9-11 world is critical for both the soldier on the battlefield and the first responder in our communities. Our purpose today was to assure the Army of our commitment in Massachusetts to supporting this mission.”

Representative Markey said, “I want to thank General Griffin and the other Army officials for an excellent meeting today. The Soldier is the central focus of our country’s engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan right now, and the Army’s Soldier Systems Center is in Natick – meaning everything and anything related to the soldier is developed or tested at Natick. The facility must remain open so that the people who are working at Natick SSC and their partners throughout Massachusetts and New England can continue to play a vital role in keeping our troops safe while winning the War in Iraq and the War on Terror.”

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The Massachusetts officials emphasized Natick's success as a joint cross-service facility, with the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force as its clients, and its potential for developing solutions to homeland security challenges.

Earlier this fall, Kennedy, Romney and Markey were joined by Representatives Meehan and Tierney in meetings with Pentagon and Air Force leaders to discuss the state's mission capacity expansion plan for Hanscom Air Force Base. The expansion proposal would add 4000 new jobs to the 33,000 jobs now supported by Hanscom and Natick.

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