WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47) today questioned key military officials during a House Armed Services Committee (HASC) hearing on the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Budget Request from the Department of Defense (DOD). Concerned by reported instances of waste, fraud and abuse within the Defense Department at a time when achieving a more balanced budget is imperative, Rep. Sanchez asked Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to evaluate the Department's current approach to fraud prevention and urged him to take more aggressive steps to punish fraudulent contractors. Recently, DOD released a Report to Congress on Contracting Fraud showing that the Pentagon has awarded $285 billion in three years to companies that defrauded it.

"I urge the Defense Department to establish an effective oversight over these contracts and to take immediate action on eliminating fraudulent payments and punishing offending contractors," said Sanchez. "A budget as large as that of the Defense Department requires strong oversight, and aggressive measures must be taken to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent appropriately and efficiently. I am committed to passing a budget that is fiscally responsible and reduces our national debt, and identifying and eliminating unnecessary government expenditures is the first step. All federal agencies must be held accountable for wasteful spending."