

105TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 170

Expressing the sense of the Congress that the President should seek to negotiate a new base rights agreement with the Government of Panama to permit the United States Armed Forces to remain in Panama beyond December 31, 1999, and to permit the United States to act independently to continue to protect the Panama Canal and to guarantee its regular operation.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 9, 1997

Mr. CRANE (for himself, Mr. STUMP, Mr. HOSTETTLER, Mr. BARR of Georgia, Mr. GIBBONS, and Mr. SNOWBARGER) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that the President should seek to negotiate a new base rights agreement with the Government of Panama to permit the United States Armed Forces to remain in Panama beyond December 31, 1999, and to permit the United States to act independently to continue to protect the Panama Canal and to guarantee its regular operation.

Whereas the Panama Canal is a vital strategic asset to the United States and its allies;

Whereas the Treaty Concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal and the Panama

Canal Treaty, both signed on September 7, 1977, mandates that (1) no United States troops are to remain in Panama after December 31, 1999; (2) the Canal Zone is to be incorporated into Panama; (3) United States Panama-based communications facilities are to be phased out; (4) all United States training in Panama of Latin American soldiers is to be halted; and (5) management and operational control of the Canal is to be turned over to Panamanian authorities;

Whereas friendly cooperative relations currently exist between the United States and the Republic of Panama;

Whereas the region has a history of unstable governments which pose a threat to the future operation of the Panama Canal, and the United States must have the discretion and the means to defend the Canal and ensure its continuous operation and availability to the military and commercial shipping of the United States and its allies in times of crisis;

Whereas the Panama Canal is vulnerable to disruption and closure by unforeseen events in Panama, by terrorist attack, and by air strikes or other attack by foreign powers;

Whereas the United States fleet depends upon the Panama Canal for rapid transit ocean to ocean in times of emergency, as demonstrated during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Persian Gulf War, thereby saving 13,000 miles and three weeks steaming effort around Cape Horn;

Whereas nearly 15 percent of all United States trade, approximately 10 percent of Latin America's trade, and al-

most 5 percent of the world's trade transit the Panama Canal;

Whereas the Republic of Panama has dissolved its defense forces and has no standing army, or other defense forces, capable of defending the Panama Canal from aggressors and, therefore, remains vulnerable to attack from both inside and outside of Panama and this may impair or interrupt the operation and accessibility of the Panama Canal;

Whereas the presence of the United States Armed Forces offers the best defense against sabotage or other threat to the Panama Canal; and

Whereas the 10,000 United States military personnel now based in the Canal Zone, including the headquarters of the United States Southern Command, cannot remain there beyond December 31, 1999, without a new agreement with Panama: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of the Congress that the
 3 President should—

4 (1) negotiate a new base rights agreement with
 5 the Government of Panama—

6 (A) to allow the permanent stationing of
 7 United States military forces in Panama beyond
 8 December 31, 1999, and

9 (B) to ensure that the United States will
 10 be able to act independently after December 31,
 11 1999, to maintain the security of the Panama

- 1 Canal and to guarantee its regular operation;
- 2 and
- 3 (2) consult with the Congress throughout the
- 4 negotiations described in paragraph (1).

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