FIX FLAWED MEDICARE PHYSICIAN REIMBURSEMENT RATE

HON. TODD TIAHRT

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage my fellow Members of Congress to act to fix the flawed Medicare physician reimbursement rate that is developing into a crisis for our nation's physicians and seniors. Last January, Medicare's flawed formula dictated a 5.4 percent cut in already inadequate reimbursement rates for physicians. Unless we do something today, a second cut of 4.4 percent will go into effect on January 1st. Many physicians around the country have already been forced to refuse new Medicare patients or face bankruptcy. In my state of Kansas—a rural state already medically underserved—physicians have lost money, but of more concern is that one survey of physicians in Kansas showed that 24 percent of them were not taking new Medicare patients. It bothers me to think of how high that number will rise if we do not act.

This problem is due to bureaucratic miscalculations when creating the payment formula. The formula needs to be fixed. and we should grant CMS the ability to do so before the second cut goes into effect.

355 of us, on both sides of the aisle, cosponsored Rep. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS' bill to fix this problem. The White House supports fixing the formula. CMS Director Scully has stated that fixing the formula is a top priority. We have strong support and a ready solution to fix this problem.

This is no ''Chicken Little'' story. Without Congressional action, the sky will fall in, doctors will be unable to participate in Medicare and our seniors will be left without care. I urge you not to close the 107th session of Congress without addressing this critical issue.

CHINA WILL ATTACK AMERICA

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 14, 2002

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I previously submitted remarks concerning America's defense against China, North Korea and Iraq. Given the eminent military action against Iraq by the United States and its allies, along with our outlook on North Korea's nuclear missile capabilities, we must also recognize China's capabilities to attack the U.S. and its national interests.

As mentioned in my previous remarks, in December 1999 China's Defense Minister, General Chi Haotian, declared war ''is inevitable'' between China and the United States. He noted, ''The issue is that the Chinese armed forces must control the initiative in this war.'' Outlined in my remarks were considerations for the United States in recognizing China's threat and our ability to control initiative during battle. Yet there are several other matters of equal importance that must be considered by U.S. leaders and officials influencing policy regarding China and its oppressive People's Liberation Army (PLA).

OIL BELT STORM

Planning for PLA aggression as well as planning for an invasion of Iraq must consider the flow and supply of oil. From China's perspective, the flow of oil from Indonesia, the Middle East, and potentially Russia must be assured to support its continued economic growth, which is needed to maintain the legitimacy of its communist government. Without oil, China's economic growth may be compromised.

In this regard, U.S. diplomacy with Sudan may be cast in a new light. We may seek to supplant Chinese oil interests. While other considerations need to be factored into our diplomacy such as its civil war, it may be asked if a more humane treatment of the inhabitants of the south could be given to respect private property rights if a U.S.-led initiative were established. It is noteworthy how the Sudanese government did proffer cooperation for the capture of Al Qaeda terrorists, but its offer was turned down by the Clinton administration.

We should ask ourselves about our ability to defend the supply of oil from the Middle East and Persian Gulf, and the development of new supplies of oil, perhaps from equatorial Africa to develop alternatives to the problematic Middle East. In this light, our relationships with African countries, and Latin American neighbors and Mexico may be given a new impetus. In fact, I just returned yesterday from the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire where I held meetings with President Laurent Gbagbo, his Prime Minister and Members of Parliament. The recent discovery of significant off-shore oil fields there have the potential to dramatically reshape the economic strength of the region.

The question of foreign oil supplies should affect our planning for naval strength, especially escort vessels that could protect oil tankers and convoys in time of war. This planning may embrace domestic policy on oil and gas production and exploration, and the development of alternative energy sources as well as the efficient use of coal.

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE

One of the lessons of the 1991 Persian Gulf War was the need for more effective ballistic missile defenses. The success of the improved Patriot-2 was incomplete. Its range was limited. It was a single-layer defense. It could not intercept Scuds during their boost phase.

More than a decade has passed since the Gulf War ended. Since that time we have begun to field a new version of the Patriot, the Patriot-3, for use against short-range ballistic missiles. But we have yet to deploy a defense against intermediate or long-range ballistic missiles, or a defense capable of intercepting ballistic missiles in their boost phase.

While, for example, on October 14, 2002 we completed the fifth successful interception test of a ground-based interceptor against an ICBM target and decoys, we have yet to deploy a defense that can intercept ICBMs.

Instead, we have canceled several effective ballistic missile defense programs since the 1991 Persian Gulf War. In 1993 the Clinton administration canceled Brilliant Pebbles, a program for building space-based interceptors that could intercept theater and long-range ballistic missiles. In 2001 the younger Bush administration canceled Navy Area Wide, which would provide coverage similar to Patriot-3 but based on Aegis ships. In 2002 we all but canceled the Space-Based Laser, ending its existence as an active program when it could provide a very effective boost-phase defense with global coverage in contrast to the limited coverage of the Air Borne Laser.

For over a decade we have cut effective ballistic missile defense programs, especially restricting space-based defenses. This regressive policy continues today. The proposed ground-based interceptor for a national missile defense, while absorbing billions of dollars, will afford only a modest capability. It will, for example, be less capable and more expensive than Brilliant Pebbles, and be susceptible to decoys and countermeasures directed at its ground-based radar and centralized command and control center.

The deployment of Patriot-3, a very modest accomplishment for ten years of development, does not compensate for the proliferation of ballistic missiles that has occurred since the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Since 1991 North Korea has built and tested the long-range Taepo Dong ballistic missile that can reach the United States. Iran has developed the intermediate-range Shahab-3, and is developing the Shahab-4 with even longer range. China has engaged in a ballistic missile buildup of all types with improved accuracy. The proliferation of ballistic missiles has extended to India and Pakistan, creating conditions for a nuclear exchange. With the exception of the draw down of the former Soviet arsenal, the ballistic missile threat has increased, and Russia's missiles are still capable of massive destruction.

NEW WEAPONS

As the PLA began its transformation in the late 1980's, recognizing the technological impetus of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative and the importance of technology in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, we began a procurement holiday, living off our forces from the Gulf War.

We reduced the acquisition of new weapons. We cut, for example, the number of B–2 bombers from 132 to 22. In ballistic missile defense, we denigrated Brilliant Pebbles from approval for acquisition in 1991 to a follow-on technology, leading to its termination in 1993. In 1995 or earlier, when we could have engaged major aerospace contractors to build a Space-Based Laser defense, we funded it at a nominal amount, leaving it as a future technological option instead of recognizing how the future was in our hands.

Today, as the Bush administration considers cutting the acquisition of F–22 stealth fighters and F–35 Joint Strike Fighters, China's surface-to-air missile (SAM) technology is advancing based on Russian SAMS, which are reportedly capable of intercepting stealth aircraft, and pose a difficult defense for F–15 and F–16 fighters.

We have yet to develop hypersonic aerospace vehicles even though they have been proposed since the 1960's. No small part of our failure to build aerospace vehicles—military space planes—may be attributed to a reluctance to embrace the Space Age, including its applications for ballistic missile defense and long-range strike vehicles.

TECHNOLOGY

Research and development has lagged for years, especially in physics, engineering, and aerospace. Our development and application of high-energy laser technology has been hindered by a lack of willingness to use this technology, whether for ballistic-missile defense or