

I want to say again, I am sure the managers of this bill will somehow try to justify this transfer out of operations and maintenance into the C-17. It is not a credible argument. It is not a credible argument.

The absence of such a threat provoked Winslow Wheeler, director of a military reform project at the Center for Defense Information, to describe. . . .

Senior Obama aides responded that the White House never sought to fix the problem of earmarks in one year. "The president has been clear from Day One: He wants to change the way business gets done in Washington". . . .

One thing I know about egregious practices, if you do not stop them early in an administration, you never will. It will be alleged that earmarks are down less than they were before, it is an important step forward, and the sponsors of the bill will say earmarks are down 27 percent in the House and 19 percent in the Senate.

Those figures are the most flattering the White House could have used: They refer to the number of earmarks in the bills, not total spending. Total spending on military earmarks in the Senate declined by only 11 percent from the \$3 billion approved by Congress last year.

"Despite the fact that earmarks are down, there's still nearly 800 . . . for projects that rose to the top by dint of political power rather than project merit," said Ryan Alexander, president of Taxpayers for Common Sense. "The president needs to take a harder line against waste and political gamesmanship, particularly in the defense bill, which is paying for two years."

Mr. President, I have an amendment at the desk, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill is not yet pending.

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank the Chair.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3326, which the clerk will report by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3326) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2558

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I have an amendment at the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Arizona [Mr. MCCAIN] proposes an amendment numbered 2558.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To strike amounts available for procurement of C-17 aircraft in excess of the amount requested by the President in the budget for fiscal year 2010 and to make such amounts available instead for operation and maintenance in accordance with amounts requested by the President in that budget and for Operation and Maintenance, Army, for overseas contingency operations)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ (a) REDUCTION OF AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT, AIR FORCE, FOR EXCESS AMOUNTS FOR C-17 AIRCRAFT.—The amount appropriated by title III under the heading "AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT, AIR FORCE" is hereby reduced by \$2,500,000,000, the amount equal to the amount by which the amount available under that heading for the procurement of C-17 aircraft exceeds the amount requested by the President in the budget for the Department of Defense for fiscal year 2010 for the procurement of such aircraft, with the amount of the reduction to be allocated to amounts otherwise available for the procurement of such aircraft.

(b) AVAILABILITY FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE.—The amount appropriated by title II for Operation and Maintenance is hereby increased by \$2,438,403,000, in accordance with amounts requested by the President in the budget for the Department of Defense for fiscal year 2010.

(c) AVAILABILITY FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, ARMY, FOR OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS.—The amount appropriated by title IX under the heading "OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, ARMY", is hereby increased by \$61,597,000.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the amendment strikes funding in the Defense appropriations bill for 10 C-17 Globemaster aircraft that we neither need nor can afford. My amendment also redirects those funds to critically important operations and maintenance accounts which the appropriators have seen fit to cut.

At about \$250 million per aircraft, the total cost to the taxpayer of the C-17 earmark in this bill is \$2.5 billion. But how are we paying for these aircraft? With the cuts made in the bill, it appears much of the offset for paying for the 10 aircraft falls on the O&M accounts. So why are we buying C-17s we don't need and can't afford while at the same time reducing overall O&M accounts by \$3 billion?

I am sure the managers of the bill will justify this cut in operations and maintenance. I would rely on the judgment of the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who will tell us they need this money for operations and maintenance.

I hope my colleagues understand what this really means. If this bill passes with these cuts, the Air Force in particular will be forced to decrease funding for training, equipment, depot maintenance, and the restoration and modernization of air bases across the United States, and they would not be alone. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and National Guard would also come out on the wrong end of these cuts and

would be forced to reduce funding for facilities sustainment, training, and recruiting.

After 8 years of war, the Army's equipment readiness has fallen to truly worrisome levels. In testimony before the Armed Services Committee this year, Secretary of the Army Pete Geren said:

Predictable and timely funding is key for us to be able to operate an organization the size of the United States Army. . . . When funding is unpredictable, it makes it very hard to plan long term.

I have seen a hollow Army, deeply degraded in the decade after Vietnam and again during the drawdown of the 1990s. Today's forces are not in such dire straits as those, but 8 years of war has taken its toll on the Army, Marines, Guard, and Reserve component ground forces. As GEN George Casey said: "The current demand for our forces exceeds the sustainable supply."

Particularly in a time of war, I urge my colleagues to invest in the recapitalization of our ground forces—not funding aircraft we neither need nor can afford with those investments.

Finally, I wish to mention the Army Reserve and National Guard, which are, as General Casey described, "performing an operational role for which they were neither originally designed nor resourced." In my view, any cut to their operations and maintenance accounts will retard the ability of these components to fit and deploy for missions at home or abroad. And I am sure the Secretary of Defense would say he would like a lot more because of the wear and tear and degradation that already exists to much of our equipment and capabilities.

We can and must do better. Left uncorrected what we would do in this bill is effectively fund the purchase of new aircraft that we neither need nor can afford with critical sustainment money. That would have a significant impact on our ability to provide the day-to-day operational funding that our service men and women and their families deserve.

Let me turn briefly to the merits of the C-17 earmark itself. If some of these remarks sound familiar, that is because I was on the floor of the Senate less than 3 months ago speaking about C-17s when the Senate Appropriations Committee earmarked eight of these cargo aircraft in the 2009 supplemental appropriations bill at a cost of \$2.25 billion. That is right. In just 3 months, the Appropriations Committee has set aside nearly \$5 billion for 18 C-17 aircraft that we don't need, the Pentagon doesn't want, and we can't afford.

Against that backdrop, over the last 3 years the White House has actively been trying to close down the C-17 production line, asking for as much as \$500 million per year to shut down the line. But over that same period, the appropriators have been working in the exact opposite direction to ensure continued funding for the program in supplemental war funding bills—bills that