

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2014

SPEECH OF

HON. DEVIN NUNES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 23, 2013

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2397) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes:

Mr. NUNES. Mr. Chair, I rise today to address the crucial need for retaining the U.S. military's force structure at Lajes Field.

Due to Air Force planners' short-sighted decision to draw down at Lajes, the United States is poised to surrender a military asset of unparalleled strategic value. Located on the Azores island chain between Europe and the United States, Lajes is like the Hawaii of the Atlantic Ocean—only closer to the American mainland. The islands belong to Portugal, a strong U.S. ally since World War II that has never prevented us from conducting operational missions.

The base at this crucial location has bolstered the United States' control of the Atlantic since World War II, proving critical to our tracking of Soviet submarines during the Cold War. It allows for U.S. access to Europe, the Middle East, and western and sub-Saharan Africa, and enables the expeditionary movement of warfighters, aircraft, ships, and global communications to AFRICOM and CENTCOM's joint, coalition, and NATO operations.

It is also a vital site for countering a major regional threat, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which has known ties to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and other violent groups. In fact, from Lajes, ten of the eighteen African countries that hold State Department Travel Warnings can be reached within six hours. Further, Lajes is well-positioned to act as a logistical hub not only for the Defense Department, but also for USAID, the State Department, and other agencies.

Having engaged with Portuguese officials for years on this issue, I know that the consequences of drawing down the base will be dire. Our strategic planners may believe we can leave a mere skeletal operation at Lajes and retain access there, but in reality, the Air Force's decision to draw down at the base means a total end to the U.S. presence at Lajes. This will severely impact the Azorean economy, forcing Portugal to find a new tenant for the site. In light of the weak Portuguese economy, we do not want to make Azoreans choose between their alliance with the United States and their ability to feed their families.

While our strategic planners may not want to be in the Azores anymore, leaders of other nations feel differently. Several high ranking Chinese officials have visited the islands in recent years, including a sojourn by China's Ambassador to Portugal just a few weeks ago, as well as a June 2012 visit to Terceira by then-Premier Wen Jiabao. The Chinese did not divulge what all these delegates were doing there, but I assure you they weren't sipping port and enjoying the pleasant climate.

In the wake of the decision to wind down Lajes, we cannot assume the Portuguese will

exclude China or other bad actors from the site simply out of allegiance to the U.S.; the recent decision to send a rapid reaction force of 500 U.S. Marines to Moron, Spain—a contingent that would have much more flexibility at the logistics hub of Lajes—could easily be interpreted as a calculated insult to our Portuguese friends.

These Marines could easily be located in Lajes, which is a safe environment that allows for forward basing at Rota, Spain, or Sigonella, Italy, or if necessary, for the deployment of troops in Western and sub-Saharan Africa. This amendment would give Defense Department planners the opportunity to think outside the box. If they did, they would realize this solution would allow the Air Force to scale-down at Lajes, provide maximum strategic flexibility for the Marines, and fully utilize the Lajes facility.

The retention of Lajes was not an issue for seventy years because prior planners never contemplated giving up something so crucial to U.S. interests. Because this Congress does not assume that Chinese and Russian subs will voluntarily stop sailing beneath the Atlantic Ocean or that jihadists will stop training in sub-Saharan Africa, we need the flexibility that Lajes' unique location provides.

As we reduce our European footprint—comprising 110,000 personnel and dozens of military installations—we need to base our decisions on each site's global strategic value and tactical and strategic flexibility. It would cost billions to build a base like Lajes today, and we must understand that the decision by Air Force planners to draw down at Lajes means closing the site and losing our access there.

Therefore, Mr. Chair, I encourage my colleagues to vote for this amendment to retain the current force structure at Lajes Field, and to keep this crucial military asset fully staffed and fully operational.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2014

SPEECH OF

HON. ELIZABETH H. ESTY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 23, 2013

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2397) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes:

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Chair, I thank my colleagues Mr. WALBERG (R-MI); Mr. COHEN (D-TN); Mr. RIGELL (R-VA) for crafting this smart, commonsense amendment which would simply reduce the Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund by \$79 million and redirect those funds to the Spending Reduction Account, saving taxpayer dollars.

This is a targeted and smart cut, at a time when we are asking all to do more with less.

And in fact, with this amendment, we would simply be funding this account at the level which this body passed last year.

Now more than ever, we need to make smart investments in our own infrastructure to create jobs and improve efficiency for our businesses.

A business owner in my district recently told me how his drivers lose two hours a day sitting in traffic . . .

. . . And many citizens in Connecticut are pleading to widen 1-84 around Waterbury and to modernize our interchanges.

Additionally, Newtown has recommended rebuilding Sandy Hook Elementary School, and there is an appropriate role for the Federal Government.

We must prioritize our investments and find ways to reduce our deficit.

I urge Members to support this amendment.

THE 1965 LANIER HIGH SCHOOL
BASKETBALL TEAM**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 24, 2013

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, 1965 will always be remembered in American History as a year of turmoil, unrest and great change. The Civil Rights Movement was in full swing, with marches, demonstrations and often dramatic confrontations by brave African Americans that were attacked, beaten and jailed as they struggled for equal rights. Their struggles shocked the world and made front page news and formented a change in the deep south.

Meanwhile as the war over civil rights raged, few noticed a sports revolution in the small city of Jackson, MS. They were seven skinny kids from Lanier High School and they dared to take on all corners. Under Principal Luther Buckley and Assistant Principal Will Anderson, legendary basketball coaches Harrison Barnes and Ormond Jordan, this team honed their skills, speed and prowess and developed into an unstoppable force whose starters came to be known as the Lanier Magnificent Seven. Known for their quickness, scoring offense and devastatingly tough defenses, this team ran up an amazing in-state record of 43 and 0 and averaged over 100 points a game in eight minute quarters and this was before the three point shot had been instituted into the game. With each game their record and legend grew and they not only won the State championship, in March 1965 they were invited to compete in the National Invitation Interscholastic Basketball Tournament, the NIIBT at Alabama State College in Montgomery Alabama.

On March 6, 1965, those seven inner city kids from Jackson, MS took on the best in the Nation, the vaunted Bears from Booker T. Washington High School from Suffolk, Virginia. The Bears were a force to reckon with, with two fantastic guards and the team was described by some sportscasters as the "team of the century." While both teams were known for their scoring prowess and dynamic offenses, the game was a defensive struggle from the very beginning. It featured heart-stopping action, amazing shots and stellar defense by both teams that dazzled the spectators and fans. The papers described it as an amazing game between two titans of high school basketball that featured great ball handling, tough perimeter defense and some of the best high school players and most electric shooting many had ever seen. At the buzzer the Lanier High School Bulldogs prevailed 58 to 55 and had done it. They beat the team of the century and won the coveted National High School Basketball Championship and were deemed