morning a most serious problem now confronted by the 22 nations and territories of the Pacific Region—the Government of France plans to explode 8 more nuclear bombs in about 8 weeks, each 10 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on the city of Hiroshima, Japan.

Mr. Speaker, the millions of men, women, and children who live in the Pacific are sick and tired of this region being used as a testing ground for nuclear explosions. And it makes me sad to see the President of France, charging like a bulldozer—totally disregarding the environmental concerns of the millions of people living in the Pacific—and I ask the American people and my colleagues to send a strong message to the French Government by not buying French goods and products as a symbolic gesture to get President Chirac off his high horse, and stop this madness by canceling the nuclear explosions—and prove to the world what real leadership is all about. I know the people of the Pacific will be grateful.

Mr. Speaker, 70 percent of the people of France do not want their government to conduct nuclear explosions in French Polynesia. The countries of the Pacific, Asia, and Europe don't support it.

What madness, Mr. Speaker. What madness.

[From the Washington Post, July 12, 1995]

WHY NOT ATOM TESTS IN FRANCE

France's unwise decision to resume nuclear testing was an invitation to the kind of protests and denunciations being generated by Greenpeace's skillful demonstration of political theater. But even before Greenpeace set sail for the test site, several Pacific countries had vehemently objected to France's intention of carrying out the explosions at a Pacific atoll. The most cutting comment came from Japan's prime minister, Tomiichi Murayama. At a recent meeting in Cannes the newly installed president of France, Jacques Chirac, confidently explained to him that the tests will be entirely safe. If they are so safe, Mr. Murayama replied, why doesn't Mr. Chirac hold them in France?

The dangers of these tests to France are, in fact, substantial. The chances of physical damage and the release of radioactivity to the atmosphere are very low. But the symbolism of a European country holding its tests on the other side of the earth, in a vestige of its former colonial empire, is proving immensely damaging to France's standing among its friends in Asia.

France says that it needs to carry out the tests to ensure the reliability of its nuclear weapons. Those weapons, like most of the American nuclear armory, were developed to counter a threat from a power that has collapsed. The great threat now, to France and the rest of the world, is the possibility of nuclear bombs in the hands of reckless and aggressive governments elsewhere. North Korea, Iraq and Iran head the list of possibilities. The tests will strengthen France's international prestige, in the view of many French politicians, by reminding others that it possesses these weapons. But in less stable and non-democratic countries, there are many dictators, juntas and nationalist fanatics who similarly aspire to improve their countries' standing in the world.

The international effort to discourage the spread of nuclear weapons is a fragile enterprise, depending mainly on trust and goodwill. But over the past half-century, the effort has been remarkably and unexpectedly successful. It depends on a bargain in which the nuclear powers agree to move toward nuclear disarmament at some indefinite point in the future, and in the meantime to avoid flaunting these portentous weapons or to use them merely for displays of one-upmanship. That's the understanding that France is now undermining. The harassment by Greenpeace is the least of the costs that these misguided tests will exact.

[From the Washington Post, July 11, 1995]

FRANCE TO CONTINUE NUCLEAR COUNTDOWN

(By Christopher Burns)

PARIS, July 10.—France insisted today that it will go ahead with nuclear-weapons tests in the South Pacific following its seizure of an environmental protest ship in the area and despite protests from demonstrators and governments around the world.

French commandos used tear gas Sunday to board and take commend of the Rainbow Warrior II, flagship of the environmental protection organization Greenpeace—an action the group called ''an outrage against peaceful protest and world opinion.''

The timing of the boarding—which took place in French waters near Mururoa atoll, site of the planned nuclear tests—was especially sensitive because it was just 10 years ago that French agents blew up the original Rainbow Warrior in New Zealand, killing one person aboard.

Today, as French warships escorted the 180-foot vessel away from Mururoa, two Greenpeace members using a motorized dinghy evaded French patrols and scaled a drilling rig at the test site to protest the eight planned nuclear blasts, but security forces removed them within 20 minutes. The rig is used to bore test shafts into the ocean bed below the atoll.

Meanwhile, in London, Bonn, Hong Kong and other cities, anti-nuclear protesters carried effigies of French President Jacques Chirac, chained themselves to the gates of French diplomatic compounds or held rallies to express their anger over the tests, scheduled to begin in September. In Washington, Greenpeace activists chained themselves to the gates of the French ambassador's residence, unfurled banners and shouted slogans denouncing the tests.

But French officials shrugged off the outcry, declaring that its seizure of the Greenpeace ship was justified. ''Faced with operations that violate the law, we do what is needed to ensure that the law is respected, and we will continue to do so,'' Prime Minister Alain Juppe said.

In Aukland, Greenpeace's New Zealand campaign director said the Rainbow Warrior II had planned to protest by sailing peacefully into the 12-mile exclusion zone around the atoll. But the French high commissioner in French Polynesia, Paul Ronciere, justifying seizure of the vessel, said the crew wanted to ''run the ship aground on a reef or on a beach'' to stymie French test plans.

Juppe added in his statement that France will take whatever measures are needed to ensure that its territorial waters are respected. He said Chirac's pledge to conduct the tests as a means of maintaining France's nuclear capability would be carried out ''because it is in the higher interest of the country.'' France says that when the tests are completed it will be ready to sign a multinational test ban treaty now being negotiated.

French leftists and environmentalists criticized Chirac's new conservative government over the tests, although there were no major protests in Paris. Indeed, the French public seems tacitly to support the government's nuclear policies.

But France came under increasing criticism today from many of its allies, most of whom have opposed the tests.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said: ''As we stated previously, we regret very much the French decision to resume nuclear testing, and we continue to urge all nuclear power's including France, to join in a global moratorium as we work to complete the comprehensive test ban treaty at the earliest possible time.''

Australia, a major critic of the tests, has signaled that it will seek Japanese support in pressuring Paris to call them off. On the seizure of the Rainbow Warrior II, Deputy Prime Minister Kim Beazley called the French action ''a disproportionate response,'' as assessment echoed by New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger, who said the French had gone ''over the top.''

Chirac is scheduled to meet German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Strasbourg, France, on Tuesday and officials in Bonn said the chancellor would bring up the issue of the tests ''and their effect on public debate in Germany.'' A recent poll showed that 95 percent of Germans oppose the tests.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members are recognized for 5 minutes each.

□ 2300

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. TOWNS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. EHRLICH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. EHRLICH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. FORD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. FORD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

INTRODUCTION OF THE TERM LIMITS ACT OF 1995

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. HOEKSTRA] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity to explain to my colleagues some legislation that we introduced earlier today. It builds on legislation which we introduced in the last Congress. It is called the Hoekstra-Hutchinson Voice on Term Limits. It is the Term Limits Act of 1995.

What this legislation does, it provides for a nonbinding national advisory referendum on congressional term limits during the November 1996 general election. As this legislation moves through the House and the Senate, this legislation would provide the first time in the history of this country where the American people would actually have the opportunity to advise Congress on a particular issue.

As the Members of this body are well aware, we had a vote earlier this year on term limits. While we did win a majority, we did not receive the necessary number of votes to move this legislation through the House and to the Senate and move it to the American people and to the States for its confirmation as an amendment to the Constitution.

What we are proposing with this legislation is enhancing the process and allowing the American people the opportunity to influence this Congress.

The process would work in this way: During the spring, summer, and early fall of 1996, we would envision a national debate on the pros and cons of term limits. Then in November of 1996, on every ballot across this country, there would be a very simple question: Should Congress approve a constitutional amendment to limit the number of terms that a Member of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate can serve in their office? Yes or no?

As the results from this national referendum would be tabulated and reported, the next Congress would come back in January of 1997. A commitment has been made that as Republicans would still maintain the majority in the House, that the first piece of legislation that we would consider would be another vote on term limits. So we would see an opportunity to have a national debate, a national referendum, and then a vote on term limits.

Really, what we are talking about is what I think this institution needs, is we need more direct input from the American people advising and influencing and providing an opportunity to set the agenda here in Washington. It is an experimental process. It is an experimental process providing an opportunity to enable the American people to set the agenda, help set the agenda in Washington and more clearly advise this House on the type of direction that we should take.

This piece of legislation is part of a broader package of bills that I introduced today which also includes the opportunity for Members or for citizens to recall Members of the House and of the Senate, providing for the inclusion of ''none of the above'' on ballots around the country, and also providing legislation to provide binding initiative and referendum.

The bill that I am talking about today, the National Voice on Term Limits, is only an advisory referendum. It is an experiment in improving democracy, and I am excited to begin this process and to move this legislation through the House of Representatives.

MEDICARE: A CONTRACT WITH OUR SENIOR CITIZENS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KIM). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago a contract with our senior citizens was created when the Medicare program was enacted, and now the Republican Congress is proposing to end Medicare as we know it and balance the budget, I am afraid, on the backs of senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican Party was against Medicare when it was enacted in 1965, and now that Republicans have regained control of Congress, one of the first things that they want to do is take $270 billion out of the program and for senior citizens to foot the bill for a balanced budget. While I believe in a balanced budget, I feel the Republican approach is incorrect, wrong and draconian.

Medicare has had a lot of success since it was established. Poverty rates for senior citizens have declined dramatically. Medicare has given seniors universal health coverage and protected them from depleting their hard-earned resources. Without Medicare, many seniors would be forced to choose between health care, food, and shelter.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read an excerpt from testimony submitted to Congress during the Medicare debate from a concerned citizen in 1963. It is from the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD: ''My mother is now 85 years old, and since she has been hospitalized before, the insurance company cancelled out her policy, and now I am paying the bill. Her sole income is a social security check for $40 a month. I hope my children will not have the same choice to make to either pay the bills or put dad on relief.'' That is from the RECORD on November 21, 1963.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Republicans have not discussed the specific details of how they plan to change Medicare, because they are afraid to tell seniors what will happen with this $270 billion in Medicare cuts.

One plan, though, that the Republicans are floating is a voucher plan, which basically limits the health care coverage of senior citizens. This voucher plan would basically give seniors substandard health care unless they have a lot of money and can afford their own health coverage. Essentially, a senior will be told that once he has used up the voucher, that he will have to pay for health care insurance out of his own pocket, and I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, the Republicans do not realize that most seniors are on a fixed income and simply will not be able to afford the extra cost that will be entailed under this proposed voucher program.

There are other Republican plans that have been discussed that will either force senior citizens into HMO's or the managed care systems that are like HMO's, and essentially what that does is to tell the seniors which doctors they can and they cannot see.

I have talked to a lot of senior citizens over the last few months about some of these alternate plans that Republicans have come up with, and most of the senior citizens I represent are very happy with their doctors and do not want to be told which doctors that are going to serve them. They are very afraid of the fact they will not be able to choose their own doctor.

Nobody really knows exactly what the Republicans are going to do, because they have not put specific proposals forward.

But their proposed Medicare cuts are so large, I am convinced it is only going to hurt senior citizens. I am afraid the Republicans will end Medicare as we know it, without telling the American public the true story of what these $270 billion in cuts are ultimately going to mean to them.

Some estimates figure that seniors will have an additional $1,000 per month of our-of-pocket costs to maintain the same health coverage that they are currently receiving, and if health costs rise faster than the growth in Medicare to seniors, then seniors are either going to get less services or pay more money. It is that simple.

Mr. Speaker, finally, during the last few nights, I have heard Republicans state that they are really concerned about saving Medicare and that is why they are putting forth these cuts in the program and the changes that we are hearing about. But I would maintain that if Republicans are truly concerned about saving Medicare and reforming it, then they should not be approaching it in the backward way that they are approaching it. Republicans are starting with $270 billion in cuts, the largest amount of cuts in the history of the Medicare program. Then, after they make these cuts, they want to gut Medicare to achieve the cost savings.

The American public should not be fooled by these Republican plans. Senior citizens should watch closely over the next few months to see what the Republicans do to the existing Medicare program, and the Republicans should not be allowed to break Medicare's contract with America's seniors.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CHRYSLER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. CHRYSLER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]