

AIR FORCE PILOT RETENTION  
ISSUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk a little bit tonight about the state of our military. I was with my good friend, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. JIMMY SAXTON) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SAXBY CHAMBLISS), two great members of the Committee on National Security this morning, observing a very interesting and unusual exercise from our takeoff point at Andrews Air Force Base. That was the refueling of a C-5 aircraft somewhere over Pennsylvania. We went up and married up with an aircraft and refueled her out of Dover, out of Delaware, undertook a refueling.

We had an opportunity to talk to our folks, our military folks, while we were doing that, briefly, before the flight and during the flight. Mr. Speaker, I harken back to the days when I came into Congress in 1980. In those days one of our biggest problems was what we called the people problem.

Coming from a Navy town, San Diego, I saw that problem manifested in the thousands of chief petty officers who were getting out of the Navy. Those were the people that really knew how to make the ships sail. It was a tremendous loss. We had a thousand petty officers a month leaving the Navy, and we could not replace them.

As I was briefed by these fine young men and women in the Air Force this morning, I could see that we are revisiting that people problem. It is probably across the board, but what we focused on today was the United States Air Force.

I want to quote General Ryan, Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He said that last year more than 800 pilots refused bonuses of \$60,000 to extend their time in service 5 years beyond the 9 they signed up for. Only 36 percent of the pilots at the 9-year mark agreed to stay on, while the Air Force goal was 50 percent, to avoid shortages.

Mr. Speaker, that means that we are going to probably have a shortage of about 835 pilots this year. The taxpayers pay about \$6 million, on the average, to train a pilot. When we lose a pilot from the United States Air Force and he goes out ahead of his retirement time to work for an airline company or to gain employment in another civilian field, we lose a great asset.

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We not only lose the \$6 million of training time because when we find another pilot to take his place, we have to expend that \$6- to \$8 million to train that pilot up, but we also lose the great experience. And, of course, there is a time lapse between losing those experienced pilots and bringing on the newly trained pilots. So we are losing this resource.

We have been asking people why they are leaving. They are not leaving be-

cause of money. A few of them are citing dollars or pay as a reason for leaving, but a lot of them are citing, most of them are citing what they call quality of life. And a lot of that has to do with what we were told about this morning as being the extreme OPTEMPO of our operations. We have a much smaller Air Force now, for example. We are down from 24 fighter airwings during Desert Storm to only about 13 today. Of course that reduction is reflected across the array of U.S. Air Force aircraft. What that means, if you are a pilot or a crewman on one of those aircraft or a ground crew, is that you are going to be working longer hours. You are going to be called up when you do not expect to be called up and when you have some pressing business to do with your own family. That means a lot of our folks are not there to see their son's graduation or their daughter's wedding or any of the other things that we do on the civilian side, on the family side that makes life bearable.

Because of that, a lot of folks are saying, we are not in a war, this is not an emergency; I am going to get a job in an area where I can spend a lot more down time with my family. So this is a family decision that people are making sitting around the kitchen table and unfortunately they are making it, they are coming down on the side of leaving the Air Force.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of these folks that are leaving are the senior people who are qualified in very important fields. A lot of them are instructor pilots. A lot of them are examiner pilots. Aerial refueling-qualified pilots, that is very important because the United States has the bulk and the backbone of the free world's refueling capability. A lot of them are airdrop-qualified pilots and special operation pilots. And so, Mr. Speaker, we are facing this time when, even though we are paying \$22,000 additional bonuses now to try to keep these pilots in, we are seeing this continued retreat and exodus from the Air Force of some of our most valuable and qualified people.

We are going to have to do something about that. It is probably going to be, part of that answer to this problem is going to be raising the top line because we are going to need to have more planes and more pilots if we are going to do this job that we have been asked to do over the last several years which has extended our OPTEMPO. I will be talking tomorrow about some other problems.

## ON CHILD CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SNYDER. I could not help but think, when the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) was speaking, I have Little Rock Air Force base in my

district and one of the places I like to visit on the base is the child care center there. It is a top flight, very high-quality child care at the center, but it is one of those issues that most Americans do not think about, that so many of our military dependents now have children and they have to be cared for or their parents will decide to get out of the Air Force.

What I wanted to discuss briefly with my colleague, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is this issue of quality child care. I am from Arkansas. We have a lot of working families there that have two folks working or single-parent families and the parent needs to work. How do you find quality child care during the day or the evening when your kids are home alone?

I am also a family doctor. We have seen a lot of research come out in the last couple years about how important brain development is in the early years of a child's life and that again points to the need for quality child care.

A lot of my district, Mr. Speaker, is rural. As I have traveled around the district, a lot of the parents do not have the option in the rural areas for quality child care that some of the other areas of my district and of the country do. Based on that basis of information and experience, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) and myself worked on a bill that would provide a source of funding that would give school districts in America the option of beginning a quality child care program for their parents if they should choose to in their school districts.

I yield to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) to discuss the topic further.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) and I have been working on this legislation for some time. It is called the Education Child Care Partnership Act. This has been something we and our staffs have really put some time and energy into. It is a bill that, if passed, would really expand working families' options for quality care for their young children.

In Maine, when I ran for this office, I called for a new national initiative on child care, and I did that because as I traveled around my district in Maine, what I heard from young parents consistently, day in and day out, was that they were finding that child care was, number one, not readily available and, number two, often more expensive than they could afford. Every day all across this country many parents simply have to go to work and now trust the most precious, the most important people in their lives, their children, to someone else.

We have in this country 13 million kids under the age of 6 in child care during the day. And too much of that child care is of mediocre quality but still not affordable to most working families. The Education Child Care