

CONGRATULATING THE 22D AIR REFUELING WING, MCCONNELL AFB, WICHITA, KS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the Men and Women of the 22d Air Refueling Wing at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kansas. The crew at the 22d won recognition as the top KC-135 maintenance team in the world at a recent competition known as the Air Mobility Rodeo. This is an event sponsored by the Air Mobility Command. It is an accomplishment that requires skill, training, leadership, teamwork, pride, professionalism and unselfish dedication to the task at hand. I take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge their great success and professionalism.

The Air Mobility Rodeo is a binational, multinational event that is designed to develop and improve techniques and procedures that enhance air mobility operations—something that is very crucial in today's world. In this year's competition at McCord Air Force Base, the participants included more than 2,500 competitors formed in 80 teams from over 300 active duty Air Force, Air Force Reserve command, Air National Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Army, and other Allied Nations. Winning this award is an important event worthy of real recognition. What also makes this such an important win is that for the 22d, it is a repeat win for this team. They walked away with the prize in the 1996 competition as well. And this leads me to say there is no question that the KC-135 aircraft at McConnell are the best maintained in the world.

Let me acknowledge the leadership at Team McConnell because without their leadership and guidance, the atmosphere at McConnell would never support the effort required to win this competition. The two key players are the Wing Commander, Col. Michael C. Gould, and the Senior Enlisted Advisor, Chief Master Sergeant Herbert V. Williams, Jr. Anyone who has been around the military understands how much the senior leadership of an organization sets the tone for the entire command.

There is one other member of the team whose contribution I want to recognize. That member is Lead Crew Chief, Sergeant Jeffery Gass. He was singled out for special recognition and was selected as Air Mobility Command's Crew Chief of the year.

It is men and women such as Sgt. Gass who make our military the most successful in the world. They are the unsung heroes—quietly working in the background, exceptionally professional, dedicated to their service and their nation, and serving the communities where they are stationed. The award nomination for Sgt. Gass is testimony to his unselfish dedication, his professional knowledge, and his service to his country and the local community.

I am particularly proud to recognize this team from McConnell Air Force

Base and Sgt. Gass not only because they contribute so much to the defense of our nation but because they contribute so much to Wichita and Kansas. Well done to the 22nd Air Refueling Wing and well done to Sgt. Gass.

#### THE MARINE ACTION IN CENTCOM FOR NEO OPERATIONS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to compliment the men and women of our sea services, the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Navy, on an operation recently conducted. It was about a month ago in the African country of Eritrea. I think we should all be very proud of the way the Navy and the Marine Corps team responded to what I refer to as a 911 call, to execute an evacuation operation, commonly called a NEO, in that part of the world in Africa. It resulted from the unrest that this country, Eritrea, has had with its neighbor, Ethiopia. Let me highlight the action as it unfolded.

On the evening of the June 5 of this year, the marines and sailors of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, part of a forward-deployed Amphibious Ready Group, received what is called a warning order. A warning order is a "heads up" that a specific tasking is about to come your way and you had better start thinking about the mission that is contained in the warning order. That mission was the removal of American citizens from Eritrea because of the increasing unrest, as I have indicated, with Ethiopia. The marines, who had just finished conducting an exercise in Jordan, began their preparations right off the bat.

At 3:30 in the afternoon of the 6th of June, the commanding officer, Colonel T.L. Moore, as ordered by General Anthony Zinni, the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Central Command, launched two C-130 aircraft along with 30 marines and sailors from this expeditionary unit. They arrived in Asmara, Eritrea, and began removing U.S. citizens and personnel from other countries. At 11:50 p.m., on that same day, the mission was complete.

What mission?

These superb marines and sailors removed from harm's way, and to safety, 105 American citizens, 24 Norwegians, 20 who were British, 8 Canadians, 3 Ethiopians, 3 Japanese, 1 Korean, 1 Mexican, and 1 Swedish civilian. I am told the C-130s were proudly flying the Stars and Stripes in regards to this mission instead of their usual command banner strictly as a matter of pride in their mission and their nation.

Also as part of this continuing effort, the U.S.S. Tarawa got underway at 3 p.m. on the 6th and steamed at full speed to the coast of Eritrea to wait for any further requests for NEO assistance in case any more problems did, simply, come up.

I think the remarkable thing about the Tarawa is that the ship did actually prepare for this mission and got underway in less than 72 hours.

There was not any fanfare in the press about this. There were no stories in the media about the successful effort or pride of our men and women involved in this important mission. I think probably too many times the only military stories we hear about are some isolated event involving a service member that creates a negative headline, or some controversial issue, like today we are hearing over the media that somehow or other we are going to lessen or keep or improve or make more stringent the rules of the military in regards to adultery.

I just wanted to take this opportunity to share this mission with my colleagues because it reflects, I think, the pride and the professionalism that is the standard of the vast majority of the members of our Armed Forces. It is so infrequent that we in the Congress really salute these fine Americans.

So, Semper Paratus and Bravo Zulu to the men and women of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, the U.S.S. Tarawa, and all other members of our Corps and Navy involved in this effort.

#### U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN KOSOVO

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I want to call to the attention of my colleagues some headlines that are in today's press in reference to the problems that we are experiencing, the challenge we face, what could be a real tragedy in Kosovo. As I look at this, here is a headline from the Washington Post, as of this morning, written by R. Jeffrey Smith of the Post foreign service: "Thousands Flee As Lawlessness Spreads In Kosovo." And it gives an up-front and personal account in regards to a particular Albanian citizen who has lived there for 40 years and was beaten in the middle of the night, and what is going on in that country.

Here is another headline from the Washington Times as of today, by Philip Smucker of the Washington Times: "Kosovar Rebels Grow Bolder."

A grimy-faced teenager with bloodshot eyes and an automatic rifle ran at us, screaming, as we came down a hill into the heart of a raging firefight yesterday, on the bloodiest weekend of the Kosovo war.

Here is another headline from the European Stars and Stripes: "Fighting Flares In Kosovo."

From the New York Times: "Rebels Claim First Capture Of Kosovo City."

Last week I had an intelligence briefing on Kosovo. They indicated if this happened, in regards to Pristina, and also in regards to Orahovac—I am having a little trouble with the pronunciation, but it is indicative of many of the communities there. So we have the fighting that has actually spread.

Here is another article from the European Stars and Stripes: "SFOR Patrols Bosnian Border for Gun-Running." That is the situation in Bosnia. Of course right down from Bosnia, we have the situation in regards to Kosovo.

I am concerned about this because I think the United States and the rest of