

CRITICAL DEFENSE SHORTFALLS

• Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing yesterday that resulted in a bipartisan call to address the readiness crisis in our armed forces. Senators charged the Joint Chiefs with warming over the critical defense shortfalls in a previous hearing last February in order to defend the President's Budget.

Many of us in Congress have been expressing to the Administration for years our concerns regarding the deep cuts in personnel, equipment, and training. Senator MCCAIN offered these warnings in a report he commissioned entitled "Going Hollow" as far back as 1993. I have written repeatedly on the subject of military readiness. In fact, last May I wrote that "the hollow state of readiness so many have warned about has arrived."

I am pleased the President and the Joint Chiefs have finally decided to abandon the shell game and address the serious weaknesses in our defense force structure. At this stage, placing blame is far less important than solving the problem. The more candid responses from the Joint Chiefs in yesterday's hearing are the first step in that process. Mr. President, I ask that two columns I have written on the subject of military readiness be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows:

UNACCEPTABLE RISK TO AMERICAN LIVES

(By U.S. Senator Bill Frist)

"Unacceptable risk," is the blunt assessment by Army four-star General David A. Bramlett describing his troops' ability to accomplish its mission.

In a disturbing memo to the Army's Chief-of-Staff, General Bramlett methodically describes the nearly insurmountable challenges facing Forces Command, for which he is responsible. "Funding has fallen below a survival level in FY99. The commanders are concerned that they can not meet the daily challenges of the three imperatives of readiness: training, quality of life and infrastructure."

General Bramlett's warning is only the latest evidence the Clinton Administration has failed to lead and maintain a ready fighting force. Consider a few other shocking examples of the damage caused by the Administration's extreme defense cuts:

In Cecil Naval Air Station, Florida, a commander reports having 43 aircraft assigned to him but only 20 operational. One new aircraft had its landing gear damaged in a botched landing. Three years later, that F/A18, after only 10 hours use, still sits idle because of the lack of spare parts.

Admiral Clemins, the Commander of the Pacific Fleet, reports that the Navy is 18,000 sailors short and is forced to send warships out of port inadequately manned.

Then Major General Marvin Esmond testified that his command, the Air Warfare Center at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, has experienced a six-month delay in skill improvement for airmen due to delays in specialized training. This shortage of properly trained personnel has forced other airmen to routinely work 70-hour weeks of 12-hour shifts.

Our forces are some 45 percent smaller than in 1989. We have traditionally maintained the ability to execute at least two major regional conflicts, each approximately

the size of the Gulf War. Today, most analysts agree we would have difficulty executing even one Gulf War-sized conflict.

This weakness may well explain the Clinton Administration's recent efforts to avoid confrontation with Iraq over weapons inspections.

Our lack of vigilance has serious consequences for our troops, our nation and even for our enemies. Only eight years ago our nation went to war in the Persian Gulf with the most ready force we have ever enjoyed. In short order we won a clear and decisive victory against one of the largest standing armies in the world.

For an armed conflict of this magnitude, there was an amazingly small loss of life for allied troops—and even for the Iraqis. Most surrendered rather than face our overwhelming forces and certain defeat. Today, America's military continues to do their duty and more, but politicians have a duty as well. We must meet our responsibility to equip and train our military so that they can not only survive, but win on the battlefield.

The Clinton Administration's platitudes about "leaner and meaner" betray this responsibility. The typical Marine, for example, is no less courageous today than he was in 1989. But he is less well trained, and there are far fewer Marines to back him up and ensure he can accomplish his mission.

As the President prepares a defense budget for the millennium, it's time to stop the erosion of our defenses. Our enemies of today are less predictable and more likely to attempt to attack at the first sign of any weakness.

Tennesseans are justly famous as volunteers in the defense of our nation. For their sake, and for the sake of all American volunteers in military service, Washington must do its duty to ensure our fighting men and women are better trained and better equipped than they are today. The price of an ill-prepared force is measured in blood, not in dollars.

OUR HOLLOW MILITARY

(By U.S. Senator Bill Frist)

Nearly six years of neglect and foreign-policy overreach have taken their toll in the Department of Defense. Make no mistake: The hollow state of readiness so many have warned about has already arrived. The Commander-in-Chief has allowed America's military preparedness to sink to the disgraceful levels of the Carter era. This administration is more concerned about the social engineering of the military's culture than the training, modernization, and maintenance that will keep our troops alive on the battlefield.

Inattention to readiness issues is reaching crisis proportions. A visiting pilot at Luke Air Force Base recently counted nearly forty F-16 fighters parked near the runway without engines. These aircraft were literally "hollow." In a recent interview, even secretary of Defense Bill Cohen acknowledged that "it does trouble us." Yet, this administration has plunged ahead with more overseas military commitments, not fewer, stretching our defenses ever thinner.

From 1993 to the present, the Clinton Pentagon has spent an average of \$2 billion every year on "Operations Other Than War" like those in Bosnia, Haiti and Somalia. Indeed Congress just passed "emergency" funding to cover more than \$1.8 billion for the Iraq mobilization and continued Bosnia "peacekeeping" operations this year. Yet, our armed forces have been in Bosnia almost three years. Without this injection of money, the ongoing expense of these operations would endanger our ability to respond to a national crisis.

Today our forces are more than 40 percent smaller than at the end of the Cold War, yet

deployments have increased by 300 to 400 percent. The Pentagon counties to play a shell game with defense dollars earmarked for the modernization and training that will keep troops alive in future conflicts. Meanwhile, the administration's feel-good foreign policies attempt to turn our servicemen and women into global caretakers.

The most important measure of military efficiency is the number of American lives lost to attain a military objective. This dangerous foreign policy reduces America's ability to defend her interests and endangers the most valuable piece of our foreign policy—our men and women in uniform. As a nation, we cannot afford to continue paying lip service to abstractions like "readiness" and "modernization" without backing them up.

Recent incidents show how closely peacetime training is linked to life and death in times of war. Last October, Defense News reported that a Russian submarine shadowed the nuclear submarine USS Coronado for several days without being detected. A year earlier, a Chilean submarine moved undetected for several days within the perimeter of a U.S. battle group during a training exercise. In both cases, the foreign submarines could have fired upon our ships at any time. Fortunately for those American crews, we aren't at war. But as one senior Navy official observed, "it is only in training that a diminished capability is evident."

More recently, I toured our operations in Bosnia. While deployments to hot spots like Bosnia have clearly been made with noble intentions, too often they have been undertaken with questionable rationales and undefined mission goals. Unrealistic deadlines have been substituted for exit strategies. In Bosnia, for instance, our entanglement is now well into its third year. This would not be so troubling except for the administration's original promises that all mission objectives were achievable in one year. When Secretary Cohen pushes for further cuts in military installations as a cost saving measure, it's worth reminding him that the Bosnia operation alone is a moneypit that has cost the American taxpayer close to \$7 billion.

Shifting goals are questionable to begin with. But to pay for them with dollars intended to maintain the nation's military readiness is simply inexcusable. These "Operations Other Than War" distract the military from its primary mission: to fight and win wars where real American interests are at stake. The more our forces stray from that mission, the less they'll be able to accomplish it, especially with minimal loss of life.

As we're asking a small military to do more with less, Washington must be disciplined in our use of shrinking defense resources. In this era of balanced budgets and relative peace, we neglect national defense at our own peril—and the peril of those Americans who put their lives on the line to protect the national interest. •

ENERGY SAVING PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS

• Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to continue our efforts toward promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy technology. The Administration has placed a high priority on energy efficiency for the coming year and we must follow their lead. The problems of air and water pollution as well as the dangers of climate change only reinforce the need for an increased effort.