

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed without amendment a joint resolution of the House of the following title:

H.J. Res. 136. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 1999, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate had passed a bill of the following title, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 109. An act to provide Federal housing assistance to Native Hawaiians.

ON NATIONAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADY of Texas). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk with my colleague the chairman of the R&D subcommittee the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) and talk a little bit to our colleagues and those that are listening about some of the background with respect to the defense requirements that we just talked about with the Speaker (Mr. GINGRICH). First, Mr. Speaker, let me talk about personnel shortages, because when we put together a defense budget, often the newspapers say the Pentagon got \$300 billion, or the Pentagon got \$250 billion or the Pentagon got this or got that. And the picture that they create is of just a big bureaucracy in Washington that takes up money, and that bureaucracy does not translate into real people who have real needs. Actually the Department of Defense is about 50 percent people. That means that not only the soldiers, the sailors, the airmen, the marines who serve this country, but also the many people who back them up. That means people who repair aircraft like those at North Island naval air rework depot in San Diego, California in my district or the people that repair the ships or the people that do the high-tech work or the teams that fly around the world as we project American military power to support a very complex military. Personnel is a very important part of our national defense. If you talk to folks like Commandant of the Marine Corps Chuck Krulak and others, you may come to the conclusion that actually they are the primary part of our national defense, they are the most important part, the good people, and they come from America's villages and towns and cities and farms and they serve in the American military often at great inconvenience and often at a pay scale that is much less than their civilian counterparts.

Let us talk about personnel shortages that we have today. The United States Air Force is going to be short almost 800 pilots, a little over 700 pilots for this fiscal year that is coming up. Now, when you train a pilot, you put

several million dollars minimum into his training, so we are losing not only those good people and all that experience but we are also losing the money that we put into their training.

□ 1445

We are going to be very short on pilots.

In the Navy we are going to be short 18,000 sailors and 1,400 recruits in this fiscal year. That means that when a guy comes back from a 3 or 4 or 5-month deployment, we have to send him out immediately to another deployment because there is nobody there to rotate with him, to fill his shoes and to give him a little family time.

Marine aviators have been traditionally our most loyal people with respect to re-upping, taking that next jump of 5 or 6 years or 4 years in the service and opting to do that instead of being in the private sector, and yet our Marine aviators are now leaving the service at a rate of 92 percent.

Even the Army, which has a limited air power but also has, obviously, a very large helicopter force attending its ground forces, is going to be 140 Apache pilots short in 1999. Now those Apache pilots you saw on CNN when they were doing such a great job on Saddam Hussein's tanks during Desert Storm. Those are the pilots that we will be lacking in this next year.

Now I talked a little bit about mission capable rates with the Speaker, and once again here are the mission capable rates, and this is a chart that shows how they are going downhill very quickly.

Mission capable is kind of like the Speaker described it. If you send out 10 aircraft or you have 10 aircraft on the line, how many of them can actually fly out and do their mission? Just like having four or five combines on your farm, and it is time to harvest the wheat, and the first thing you ask your foreman is how many of the combines are working. It may not be all the combines are working; maybe only half of them are working.

Well, we have gone from a mission capable rate that, for example, for the Air Force was 83.4 percent in 1991; that is when George Bush led us in Desert Storm; to today to about 74 percent. We have gone with the Marine Corps from 77 percent to about 61 percent, and with the Navy from 69 percent, almost 70 percent, to 61 percent. That means 6 out of 10 aircraft are able to actually get off the ground and perform their missions.

That is a good example of our declining readiness rates, and that means we have a lack of spare parts and we do not have enough components and enough people in some cases. That means mechanics and the people, the high-tech people that make these very complex weapons systems work, not enough people in the pipeline, not enough people on-station at that particular base to take care of those problems.

Let us go to equipment shortages.

We had almost a 600-ship Navy when Ronald Reagan left office. Today we are down to about 330 ships. We actually had about 546 ships in 1991. Today we are down to about 330. But we are losing a lot of those ships, we are retiring a lot of them. A lot of them are getting older, and, as you know, it takes a long time to build a ship. In fact, it was remarked the other day by one of our assistant secretaries for shipbuilding that actually when we started World War II, all the keels for the battleships had already been laid, meaning we had actually started to build these battleships knowing that there might be a problem. When FDR knew we would probably have a conflict with Adolf Hitler, he started a pretty good shipbuilding program in the late 1930's, and those ships got completed and got put to sea during World War II in the 1940s.

But the point is you have to start ships early. If you are going to field a ship in 1997, you need to start it in 1993 or 1994. Well, in this case we are building down to a 200-ship fleet by 2020. That means we are not replacing the ships in a 1-for-1 fashion. That means every time you retire three old ships, you only replace it with one young ship, one new ship. That means that we are going to have a 200-ship fleet by the year 2020 if we do not increase shipbuilding.

Ammunition shortages; we are \$1.7 billion short for the basic ammunition supply for the Army.

Now I would say that we have a couple of duties to the people that wear uniforms who still carry rifles in the field and still fire artillery and do those very things that are very, very difficult in this modern world where you have bio warfare, biological warfare, chemical warfare threatening them, surface-to-surface missiles threatening them. Well, one of the basic things you do for your soldiers and your marines is you give them enough ammo. We do not have enough ammunition for the so-called two regional contingency that we are supposed to plan for. That means if Saddam Hussein starts a fight in the Middle East, and North Korea takes advantage of that by coming down the peninsula, you have to have enough ammo to handle both those wars, both those contingencies.

We are short right now, we are short \$1.6 billion in basic ammunition.

Now that is not money for the Pentagon, that is money for people in the field who carry weapons in defense of this country who need to have ammo. There is nobody here who would send out a police force in a very difficult area without giving them ammunition for their guns, and yet we are preparing to do that with our people who wear the uniform in the Army and the Marine Corps.

Age and equipment; this is a pretty good example.

The CH-46 is kind of our workhorse helicopter in the U.S. Marine Corps. We