

Museum at the National Museum of Ireland—which will recognise the enormous contribution of Irish nationals serving in many armies and in many countries over the past 250 years—including those who served with distinction in the Armed Forces of the United States—and of course the two hundred thousand from all parts of Ireland, who were proud to serve in the British Army during the First World War—so many of whom paid the ultimate price.

The hopes and ideals which we all share for Northern Ireland are represented and cherished under this roof each and every day. As I conclude, I can do no better than to quote from the Library's own words, that in leaving here, we come away with new insights—we are all inspired by President Kennedy's vision that one person can make a difference and that every person should try.

MILITARY READINESS AND THE DEFENSE BUDGET

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, over the past several weeks, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a series of hearings to review the status of our armed forces. I scheduled these hearings because I have been concerned for some time that the Administration's defense budget was inadequate to maintain readiness and because members and staff were bringing back anecdotal information indicating the readiness of our armed forces was declining.

On September 29, the committee heard from General Shelton, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other members of the Joint Chiefs, General Reimer, Admiral Johnson, General Ryan, and General Krulak. The hearing has been described by the media as adversarial, however, I would describe it as open, candid and productive. It was not surprising that the Chiefs acknowledged the U.S. military is falling into a readiness crisis and faces the danger of becoming a "hollow" force if appropriate measures are not taken. They specifically indicated the need for additional resources now and in the out years. Most illustrative of the testimony is the following quote by General Shelton:

I must admit up front that our forces are showing increasing signs of serious wear. Anecdotal and now measurable evidence indicates that our current readiness is fraying and that the long-term health of the Total Force is in jeopardy.

Mr. President, on October 6, the committee followed up the hearing with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with a hearing at which Secretary of Defense Cohen and General Shelton testified. Although the focus of the hearing was to be primarily on world trouble spots, the readiness status of our forces also became a subject of intense debate. Secretary Cohen reiterated the concerns of the service chiefs and indicated that he would seek additional funds in the fiscal year 2000 budget.

Mr. President, the indicators that most concerned the service chiefs and brought them to the realization that readiness was clearly declining included downturns in recruiting and retention, a shortfall in unit training,

and widespread equipment breakdowns and spare parts shortages. These are basic indicators whose impact is felt throughout the ranks, in units throughout all the services and affect operations, training, morale and esprit de corps.

Mr. President, when pressed to explain the reasons for the decline in readiness, Secretary Cohen and the Joint Chiefs of Staff attributed the cause primarily to the high operational tempo and the under funding of the defense budgets. General Reimer encapsulated the problem in this way during the September 29 hearing:

Soldiers are asking, "When is it going to stop? When will the downsizing end? When will our leaders stop asking us to do more with less?" Our soldiers are smart, hard working, and dedicated. They are also very tired.

For many of us, the acknowledged shortfall in defense spending is not a surprise. Last year, during the Senate debate on the budget resolution, I expressed my concerns that funding levels for defense considered in the budget agreement would not provide sufficient funds to adequately sustain over time the personnel, quality of life, readiness and modernization programs critical to our military services. Regretfully, my concerns have become a reality sooner than expected and we must now take measures to resolve these problems and reverse the decline in the readiness of our military services.

Mr. President, as long as the administration continues to pursue a foreign policy that requires the U.S. military to be a global police force, our troops will be challenged by an operational tempo higher than that of the cold war. If the administration persists in this endeavor, we must ensure that our armed forces have the funds to carry out these operations while maintaining a force structure that withstands the impact of the high operational and personnel tempos associated with our current aggressive foreign policy.

More importantly, we have the responsibility to correct those quality of life and modernization shortfalls identified during our hearings. General Shelton recommended the following:

My recommendation is to apply additional funding to two very real, very pressing concerns. First, we need to fix the so-called REDUX retirement system and return the bulk of our force to the program that covers our more senior members—that is, a retirement program that provides 50 percent of average base pay upon completion of twenty years of service. Second, we must begin to close the substantial gap between what we pay our men and women in uniform and what their civilian counterparts with similar skills, training, and education are earning.

General Reimer described the modernization problem as follows:

In order to preserve future readiness, we must begin today to increase our modernization accounts and to develop the equipment, force structures, professional development systems, training, and doctrine we will need to prepare for the future. And we must develop all these capabilities together.

Mr. President, during the October 29 hearing, Secretary Cohen assured us

that he would address these problems in the fiscal year 2000 budget request. In my judgement, it would require a substantial increase in the defense budget to alleviate the problems recently acknowledged by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During the hearings, the service chiefs testified they needed approximately \$17.5 billion additional annually to correct the near and long term readiness problems. This amount does not include a pay increase nor does it include the funding necessary to change the retirement program.

With respect to the retirement issue, the Armed Services Committee will consider carefully the recommendations of the Secretary of Defense in his fiscal year 2000 budget request and will address this issue in the Defense authorization bill. Senator LEVIN and I wrote the Secretary of Defense on October 8 indicating that we believe he should conduct appropriate analyses to determine the greatest readiness payoff among the measures under consideration to improve recruiting and retention, including pay, retirement, housing, health care, personnel tempo, and morale and recreation programs and facilities. These analyses will be crucial to making the difficult funding decisions we will face next year. I ask unanimous consent that our letter of October 8 be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, the Joint Chiefs described alarming indicators of declining readiness. I strongly believe that if there is an actual emergency that should be addressed in this omnibus supplemental bill, it should be military readiness. The Joint Chiefs testified that while the \$1 billion readiness supplemental requested by the Department of Defense would be helpful, it is inadequate to maintain the readiness of our military forces. I believe that, as the highest priority, the Congress should have provided an emergency supplemental for military readiness of at least \$2 billion. Mr. President, while I appreciate and commend the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee and the majority leader for negotiating this agreement under difficult circumstances, I regret that the final agreement provides only half that amount which I believe is required now to shore up our military readiness.

Mr. President, next year, we are going to have to face up to the serious fiscal problems our military services are experiencing in addition to already existing outlay problems. The Secretary of Defense is conferring now with the Office of Management and Budget to determine how additional funds can be provided for defense next year and in the out years. I do not believe the administration will request

the additional \$20 billion or so which the Joint Chiefs indicated will be required annually over the next 5 years to address personnel, readiness, and modernization deficiencies.

The Congress will have to come to grips with these funding realities or consider significantly scaling back our worldwide commitments. We cannot continue to have it both ways. It is unfair to our men and women in uniform and cannot be sustained over time.

Mr. President, our hearings have substantiated the readiness and funding problem facing our armed forces. The solution to these problems will require the close cooperation between the Congress and the administration. It will require the Congress to relook the balanced budget agreement and will require challenging decisions by all parties. We have no choice but to make careful and deliberate decisions. The future of our Nation and the lives of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines depend on it.

EXHIBIT 1

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, October 8, 1998.

Hon. WILLIAM S. COHEN,
Secretary of Defense,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: In light of your recent testimony and the testimony of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before the Committee, it is obvious that maintaining the delicate balance among the key components of personnel and quality of life, readiness and modernization in the FY2000–2005 Future Years Defense Plan will be difficult. The current discussions of “catch-up” pay raises, returning to a richer military retirement system, funding modernization programs, providing adequate training funds and controlling high personnel and operational tempos make your task of setting priorities a significant challenge.

As you develop the defense budget request for fiscal year 2000, it is imperative that the Department thoroughly analyze any proposals to address the pay gap or return to the pre-August 1986 military retirement system. We are totally committed, as we are sure you are, to taking care of our military personnel and their families. However, before enacting any proposals in this area with significant long-term costs, the Department of Defense and the Congress must have a clear view of the likely impact of the proposals on recruiting, retention, and military readiness.

During our hearing on October 6, 1998, you testified that you would address the issues of military pay and retirement in your fiscal year 2000 budget. As you and the Chiefs testified, there are a number of programs that combine to make up Quality of Life for our military personnel and their families, including pay, retirement, housing, health care, personnel tempo and morale and recreation programs and facilities. We believe that recommendations included in your budget request for the areas indicated above must be fully supported by careful analyses justifying the costs and providing assurance of measurable increases in recruiting, retention and military readiness.

We look forward to reviewing your recommendations in the FY 2000 budget request.

Sincerely,

CARL LEVIN,
Ranking Member.
STROM THURMOND,
Chairman.

NEWMAN POSTAL SITUATION

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, it is with great concern that I rise to address a recurring problem in my state with the United States Postal Service. It seems that we are continually faced with situations where the Postal Service has created controversy by indicating—in some cases—that they will move existing post offices from downtown areas. In Georgia, as in many states, these post offices have been main street fixtures for residents, creating a meeting place for shoppers, business people and officials. The idea of moving these post offices is particularly worrisome for rural areas where local merchants have long relied upon this common bond. It is a problem that Congress should examine in order to work with the Postal Service to promote a better understanding and working relationship with the affected communities.

We currently have a particular case in Newnan, Georgia which illustrates the problem. After receiving word from the community that the post office was moving out of the downtown area, we began contact with the Postal Service to determine whether or not these rumors were true. We gained assurances from the Postal Service that they did not intend to move from the downtown area because there was “overwhelming community support” for keeping it there. Since that time, we have received another report from the Postal Service that, because of security requirements, they indeed may have to move to an alternate location. I am concerned by the lack of clarity in the reports my office has received on this matter and am working to get a clarification from the Postal Service. I would like to reiterate for the record my commitment to maintaining a full service postal facility in downtown Newnan. I would welcome the opportunity to work with local officials and businesses in Newnan and the Postal Service to meet this goal.

As I mentioned, Mr. President, this matter in Newnan is a reflection of the work we have ahead to avoid these controversies between smaller communities and the post office. It is a problem I hope we rectify favorably for the citizens of Newnan in this case, and for people all over America in the future.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, in his capacity as a Senator from the State of Montana, seeing no other Senators desiring to speak, asks unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

There being no objection, at 10:24 a.m., the Senate recessed until 1:29 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BURNS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Alaska.

OMNIBUS CONSOLIDATED AND EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1999—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be 3 hours equally divided for debate today on the conference report to accompany H.R. 4328, the omnibus appropriations bill for 1999, notwithstanding the receipt of the papers, and that when the Senate receives the conference report, it be considered as having been read with no action other than debate occurring and the vote to occur at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, without any intervening action, debate or motion, and that paragraph 4 of rule XII and all points of order be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Hearing none, without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that 15 minutes of the time under my control as manager of the bill on our side be under the control of Senator GREGG, and that following the vote Senator SPECTER be recognized for up to 15 minutes for general debate, to be followed by Senator ASHCROFT for 30 minutes of general debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, it is with some regret that it is my job to bring before the Senate the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1999. Throughout the year, I have urged that we find a way to move on the individual appropriations bills so that we would avoid a repetition of what took place 2 years ago. Unfortunately, that request was not followed, despite the urging of the distinguished majority leader and minority leader to work with the Appropriations Committee.

We were unable to finish the bills within the normal timeframe this year.

We had an extremely difficult calendar because of the fact that Labor Day—the first Monday was the 7th of September. We then had the Jewish holidays which we were in recess for. We were just unable to finish in time. We had to get first one and then another and then another and now another continuing resolution in order to try and finish our work. I deeply regret the process that we are going through now.

It is my task to present to the Senate, I think, the largest appropriations bill in a decade. Mr. President, it contains a grand total of \$486.8 billion in