shield reckless and negligent gun dealers from public scrutiny and weaken the BATFE's oversight and enforcement authority.

INCREASING MILITARY PAY CATEGORIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have joined Senator DASCHLE in introducing a bill that would make permanent the increases in imminent danger pay and family separation allowance passed by Congress in the Fiscal Year 03 Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act.

Last spring, when the Senate considered the Budget Resolution, it passed, by a vote of 100 to 0, an amendment I offered with Senator LANDRIEU that would have allowed for $1 billion to cover the increase in these special pay categories.

Then, when the Senate considered the Fiscal Year 2003 Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act, it unanimously accepted an amendment I offered with Senator STEVENS and Senator INOUYE, increasing these pay categories for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The amendment we offered to the Supplemental sunset these pay increased, not because we wished to end them, but simply to allow the Armed Services Committee—the Committee of jurisdiction—to increase these pay levels in the Fiscal Year 2004 Defense Authorization bill, which it did.

Now—when soldiers are dying in Iraq and military families have been separated for many months—we hear that the Administration wishes to cut these pay increases in the Conference Committee.

The Statement of Administration Policy on the House version of the bill objects to the provision increasing both pay categories, saying it would "divert resources unnecessarily." The statement on the Senate bill only objects to the increase in Family Separation Allowance.

When confronted with questions about why the Administration wanted to reduce these pay categories, Defense Department spokesman, Under Secretary David Chu, came up with the classic Washington non-denial denial. On August 14, Chu said: "I'd just like very quickly to put to rest what I understand has been a burgeoning rumor that somehow we are going to reduce compensation for those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. That is not true. . . ."

"What I think you're pointing to is one piece of very thick technical appeal document that speaks to the question do we want to extend the language Congress used in the Family Separation Allowance and Imminent Danger Pay statutes. And no, we don't think we need to extend that language. That's a different statement from are we going to reduce compensation for those in Iraq and Afghanistan . . ."

What do these statements mean?

Evidently the administration wants to claim that it will keep compensation the same for those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan through other pay categories, but do indeed intend to roll back the increases to imminent danger pay and family separation allowance.

This means that a soldier getting shot at fighting the war on terrorism in Yemen or the Philippines would receive less money than one who is similarly risking his or her life in Iraq. This means that a family bearing huge costs because of burdensome, long-term deployments would only be helped if the service member is deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, but not if that same service member is deployed anywhere else in the world.

It is unfair to cut funding intended to help military families that are bearing the costs of far-flung U.S. deployments. It is unacceptable that imminent danger would be worth less in one combat zone than in another.

The bill we introduce today makes a clear statement that these pay categories should be increased permanently and should not be cut in conference.

Until these pay levels were increased in the Supplemental, an American soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine who put his or her life on the line in imminent danger only received an extra $150 per month. My amendment increased that amount to $225 per month—still only an acknowledgment of their courage, but an increase nonetheless.

Prior to the increase in the supplemental appropriations bill, family separation had been only $100 per month. We succeeded in raising it to $250 per month. These increases are only part of a normal progression of increases—for example, in 1965, imminent danger pay was $55; $100 in 1985, and raised to $150 in 1991. Family separation allowance was $30 in 1970, $60 in 1985, $75 in 1991, and $100 in 1997.

Family separation allowance was originally intended to pay for things that the deployed service member would have done, like cut the grass, that the spouse may then have had to hire someone to do. That may well have been appropriate in the past, but now most families have two working spouses—sometimes two working military spouses—and the absence of one or both parent may add huge child care costs that even the increased rate is unlikely to cover.

Military spouses sometimes find that they must give up their jobs or curtail their working hours in order to take up the family responsibilities that otherwise would have been shared by the missing spouse.

Example of increased costs that families may incur when military personnel are deployed, in addition to increased child care costs include: health care costs not covered by TRICARE, for example, the cost of counseling for children having a difficult time with their parents' deployment; costs for the family of an activated Reservist or National Guard member to travel to mobilization briefings, which may be in another state; various communication and information-gathering costs.

I would like to quote for the RECORD from an article that appeared in The Washington Post on April 11, 2003, entitled "Military Families Turn to Aid Groups," that outlines how military families have had to rely on private aid organizations to help them when their spouses are deployed. The article highlights the case of one mother, Michele Mignosa and says:

> The last 18 months have brought one mishap or another to Michelle Mignosa. Her husband, Kevin, is an Air Force reservist who since Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks has been away from their Lancaster, Calif., home almost as much as he's been there. First, there were the out-of-state trips to provide airport security. Then he was deployed to Turkey for 2½ months last spring. Now he's in Greece with an air-refueling unit . . . And while he has been gone, the problems have piled up at home . . . Strapped for cash since giving up her part-time job because of Kevin's frequent far-off postings, she didn't know where the money would come from to resolve yet another problem.

I applaud the efforts of private aid groups to help military families, but I believe that it is the duty of the U.S. Government to cover more of the costs incurred because of military deployments. It should not matter to which country the service member is deployed. Cuts must not be made to funds helping military families that are bearing the costs of war, homeland security, and US military commitments abroad.

To say that pay will not decrease to those serving in Iraq or Afghanistan is ignoring the truth—rolling back family separation allowance from $250 per month to $100 per month will cost our military families and could be especially painful those living on the edge.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill that Senator DASCHLE and I have introduced and make a strong statement to the Defense Department that Congress will not stand for cutting imminent danger pay and family separation allowance.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IN HONOR OF JOHNNY CASH

• Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the resolution to honor a great singer, a great songwriter, a great American, a man who truly lived the American Dream. J.R. Cash, otherwise known as "the man in black," Johnny Cash, captivated all those who listened during a career that spanned four decades. The man in black was a man who embodied and lived the spirit of working class America and transformed that spirit into song. I speak today to honor the life and work of this Arkansas native and music legend, and I would like to thank the Senator from Tennessee, Mr. ALEXANDER, for his resolution and kind words.