

given country, region, and throughout the continent.

Finally, the Congress needs to be prepared to support this new effort. It will be essential that Congress take into account the needs of the Defense Department and the individual uniformed services as this new command is created. But it is equally essential that Congress take into account the needs of the State Department, USAID, and other agencies that are trying to ramp up their efforts throughout the continent. If anything, the creation of a new combatant command for Africa should signal the dramatically increasing importance of Africa to our national security, and that to truly address the range of challenges present there we need to look at an equally aggressive plan to strengthen our diplomatic, development, humanitarian, and human rights work throughout the continent. This may include addressing how the Congress allocates funds—both to this new command and to the other departments and agencies that will make the spirit and intent of this command work.

In closing, we must focus greater resources on Africa but we should ensure that our efforts in Africa do not become primarily military in nature, and that the State Department continues to play the primary leadership role with respect to our efforts on the continent. Those within the Defense Department, the State Department, at USAID and other key departments and agencies will need to use this as an opportunity to evaluate and enhance the way they do business. The success of this governmental effort requires it, and our national security depends on it.

COAL TO LIQUIDS FUEL PRODUCTION ACT

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my distinguished colleague, the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. BUNNING, in introducing this important legislation.

The geologic deposit known as Illinois Basin Coal—which lies beneath Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky—has more untapped energy potential than the combined oil reserves of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This coal deposit underlies more than 65 percent of the surface of the State of Illinois, with recoverable reserves estimated to be in excess of 38 billion tons from my State alone. Moreover, with just a glance at a map of Illinois, one can see that my State is dotted with towns that reflect our 200-year coal mining history—towns with names like Carbondale, Energy, Carbon Hill, Coal City, and Zeigler.

In some parts of Illinois, however, these names are just shadows of the past. More than 15 years ago, upon the enactment of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, coal mining in Illinois was drastically transformed. Given the high sulfur content of Illi-

nois coal, many users switched from Illinois coal to other, lower sulfur coals mined out West. As a result, thousands of Illinois jobs vanished, and with it, the life force of many of these towns. Air quality throughout the Nation improved drastically, but vast energy resources were rendered idle, awaiting new future technologies.

Today, we are exploring those new technologies, which promise a renaissance for coal communities. Two east central Illinois towns, for example, are under consideration for the billion-dollar FutureGen project, which many of my colleagues know will be the first near zero-emissions coal-fired powerplant in the world.

But coal from the Illinois Basin, with its high energy content, is a superb feedstock not just for power generation, as promised by FutureGen, but also for the manufacture of Fischer-Tropsch—FT—fuel. Created in the 1920s by German scientists and used during World War II, the FT process is the major fuel source for vehicles in South Africa. In both nations, the production of diesels from coal was developed as a response to petroleum embargoes against those nations at various points in their history.

Meanwhile, in the United States, more than 55 percent of our fuel consumption continues to come from foreign oil, and that number is growing. Our economy is exposed to potential jeopardy from oil supply disruptions and price shocks. We must diversify our fuel supply, and that means all domestic options should be on the table for consideration.

Fischer-Tropsch fuel is interchangeable with standard diesel, functioning in existing engines with little or no modification. FT fuels can be transported in our existing fuel distribution infrastructure. Moreover, FT fuels have far lower emissions than standard diesel. The Department of Defense, the largest consumer of petroleum in the United States, has great interest in acquiring this fuel. But Fischer-Tropsch is not manufactured in the U.S., and no focused federal initiatives exist to encourage the development of a Fischer-Tropsch manufacturing base.

The bill introduced by Senator BUNNING and myself will provide that Federal focus. This bill will help to create a new market for abandoned and abundant Illinois Basin coal, revitalizing economic development and jobs in the coal communities of our States. It will help develop the capital infrastructure for producing FT fuels at the levels necessary for preliminary testing by the Department of Defense and for the private sector. It will explore carbon sequestration for this technology before we can pursue construction. And it will play a key role in reducing our Nation's dependence on foreign oil.

I know that there are no perfect answers in the pursuit of energy independence. There is no single fuel or feedstock that offers affordability, reliability, transportability, and sensi-

tivity to the environment in equal ways. But, as we pursue the best course of action for our energy independence, we cannot delay action until we reach the perfect solution. Maintaining our dependency on unstable regions of the world for the fuel that we cannot live without is far too great a risk. Actions taken today must be accompanied by rigorous concurrent debate in preparation for the second and third generation choices of our alternative fuel infrastructure.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

60TH BIRTHDAY OF THE NORTH DAKOTA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

• Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, January 16, 2007, is a special day for North Dakota.

It is the 60th birthday of the North Dakota Air National Guard. It will also mark a major milestone in the history of the North Dakota Air National Guard. On that day the 119th Fighter Wing will conduct a ceremony honoring the final flight of their F-16s, closing out an illustrious history of flying fighter aircraft in defense of our country.

On that day, the 119th Fighter Wing will also introduce the public to its two new missions, operating Predator unmanned aerial systems and flying light transport aircraft.

The North Dakota Air National Guard began on January 16, 1947. The first Air Guard squadron organized in North Dakota was the 178th Fighter Squadron in Fargo. The first meetings were held in the Army National Guard Armory in downtown Fargo but the squadron moved to Hector Airport by the end of the year.

Duane Larson was the squadron commander during the 1950s. He was nicknamed "Pappy" because he was the senior fighter pilot. The squadron started calling themselves Pappy Larson and his Happy Hooligans after an old comic strip. The squadron has been called the Happy Hooligans ever since.

The Happy Hooligans began operations with the P-51D Mustang. They flew the Mustang until 1954. After that they flew F-94s, F-89s, F-102s, F-101B Voodoos and F-4D Phantoms. Since 1990, they have flown F-16s.

On April 1, 1951, the Hooligans were mobilized for Federal service and ordered to active duty during the Korean conflict. When they were demobilized in 1954, they were put on alert to defend against an attack by the Soviet Union. At first, the alert consisted of aircraft on the main ramp of Hector Field with aircrew sleeping in a nearby building on base.

The alert mission was supposed to be a temporary mission for the Happy Hooligans. It was only supposed to last