

“The crews do not come to learn how to fly, but instead how to be the best combat aviators in the world.”

As we celebrate this historic occasion, we must never forget the importance of places like Nellis Air Force Base. I know many of my colleagues here in the U.S. Senate share my belief that America's ability to project its military might in the skies around the world is a direct result of the expert training programs at facilities like Nellis. Today we honor all of the men and women who have served proudly in the U.S. Air Force over the past 60 years. We owe them a tremendous amount of gratitude for their courageous sacrifices in defending the nation that we all work so hard to preserve.

#### APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the attached list of subcommittee assignments for the Committee on Appropriations be printed in the RECORD, to supplant the list printed in the RECORD on February 27, 2007.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

##### SUBCOMMITTEES

Senator Byrd, as chairman of the Committee, and Senator Cochran, as ranking minority member of the Committee, are ex officio members of all subcommittees of which they are not regular members.

##### AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Kohl,<sup>1</sup> Harkin, Dorgan, Feinstein, Durbin, Johnson, Nelson, Reed, Bennett,<sup>2</sup> Cochran, Specter, Bond, McConnell, Craig, Brownback. (8-7)

##### COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Mikulski,<sup>1</sup> Inouye, Leahy, Kohl, Harkin, Dorgan, Feinstein, Reed, Lautenberg, Shelby,<sup>2</sup> Gregg, Stevens, Domenici, McConnell, Hutchison, Brownback, Alexander. (9-8)

##### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Senators Inouye,<sup>1</sup> Byrd, Leahy, Harkin, Dorgan, Durbin, Feinstein, Mikulski, Kohl, Murray, Stevens,<sup>2</sup> Cochran, Specter, Domenici, Bond, McConnell, Shelby, Gregg, Hutchison. (10-9)

##### ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT

Senators Dorgan,<sup>1</sup> Byrd, Murray, Feinstein, Johnson, Landrieu, Inouye, Reed, Lautenberg, Domenici,<sup>2</sup> Cochran, McConnell, Bennett, Craig, Bond, Hutchison, Allard. (9-8)

##### FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Senators Durbin,<sup>1</sup> Murray, Landrieu, Lautenberg, Nelson, Brownback,<sup>2</sup> Bond, Shelby, Allard. (5-4)

##### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Senators Byrd,<sup>1</sup> Inouye, Leahy, Mikulski, Kohl, Murray, Landrieu, Lautenberg, Nelson, Cochran,<sup>2</sup> Gregg, Stevens, Specter, Domenici, Shelby, Craig, Alexander. (9-8)

##### DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Feinstein,<sup>1</sup> Byrd, Leahy, Dorgan, Mikulski, Kohl, Johnson, Reed, Nelson, Allard,<sup>2</sup> Craig, Stevens, Cochran, Domenici, Bennett, Gregg, Alexander. (9-8)

##### DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Harkin,<sup>1</sup> Inouye, Kohl, Murray, Landrieu, Durbin, Reed, Lautenberg, Specter,<sup>2</sup> Cochran, Gregg, Craig, Hutchison, Stevens, Shelby. (8-7)

##### LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Senators Landrieu,<sup>1</sup> Durbin, Nelson, Alexander,<sup>2</sup> Allard. (3-2)

##### MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Johnson,<sup>1</sup> Inouye, Landrieu, Byrd, Murray, Reed, Nelson, Hutchison,<sup>2</sup> Craig, Brownback, Allard, McConnell, Bennett. (7-6)

##### STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS

Senators Leahy,<sup>1</sup> Inouye, Harkin, Mikulski, Durbin, Johnson, Landrieu, Reed, Gregg,<sup>2</sup> McConnell, Specter, Bennett, Bond, Brownback, Alexander. (8-7)

##### TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Murray,<sup>1</sup> Byrd, Mikulski, Kohl, Durbin, Dorgan, Leahy, Harkin, Feinstein, Johnson, Lautenberg, Bond,<sup>2</sup> Shelby, Specter, Bennett, Hutchison, Brownback, Stevens, Domenici, Alexander, Allard. (11-10)

<sup>1</sup> Subcommittee chairman.

<sup>2</sup> Ranking minority member.

#### SRI LANKA

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, it has been a little over a year since I last spoke in this Chamber about the fragile peace process in Sri Lanka. I want to take a moment to discuss the situation today because in the past year we have seen human rights in that small island nation steadily deteriorate. I also want to correct some confusion that may have occurred as a result of statements reported in the press regarding the Senate's action in connection with the fiscal year 2008 State, Foreign Operations appropriations bill. That bill passed the Senate by a vote of 81 to 12 on September 6, 2007, and we are waiting to begin conference discussions with the House of Representatives.

Over the years, I have been a strong supporter of U.S.-Sri Lankan relations. A good friend, Ambassador James Spain, served there, and the American people acted quickly to provide emergency assistance for Sri Lanka after the December 2004 tsunami devastated Sri Lanka's east, north, and southern coasts, claiming tens of thousands of lives. Beyond that, we have long supported the Sri Lankan Government's efforts to respond to acts of terrorism by the LTTE, which has been designated by the Department of State and the European Union as a foreign terrorist organization because of its attacks against civilians, assassinations of political leaders, forced recruitment of children, and other crimes.

We deplore these tactics. However, we are also aware that the LTTE has, at times, shown a willingness to participate in serious negotiations, as well as to respond to human rights concerns. These overtures should be pursued. We also recognize that the LTTE

should not be equated with the Tamil community. There are many ethnic Tamils living in and outside of Sri Lanka who do not condone acts of violence and terrorism against civilians. Many have been victims of the LTTE themselves.

At the same time, our aid to the Sri Lankan Government is not a blank check. We have been increasingly concerned with reports of abuses by Sri Lankan Government forces—not from the LTTE or their supporters as some have inaccurately claimed but from the United Nations, the Department of State, and international human rights organizations. These reports are not “disinformation” or “misinformation” as some Sri Lankan officials have alleged. Rather, they contain specific, documented, consistent information indicating a steady increase in serious human rights violations by both Sri Lankan Government forces and the LTTE since the collapse of the ceasefire. While the first acts of aggression were attributed to the LTTE, these reports also implicate Government forces in attacks on civilians, extrajudicial executions, torture, and forced disappearances. There is also evidence that Sri Lankan Government forces have stood by while allied paramilitary organizations have carried out abuses, including forcibly recruiting child soldiers. With few exceptions, the Sri Lankan Government has yet to bring the perpetrators, including members of Government security forces, to justice.

It is important to note that the Sri Lankan Government's respect for human rights and the rule of law has deteriorated even outside conflict-affected areas. The Millennium Challenge Corporation suspended more than \$11 million intended for Sri Lanka because of the deteriorating security situation and the Government's worsening performance on human rights. Freedom House, whose assessments of political rights and civil liberties are factored into the Millennium Challenge Corporation's analysis, stated “The serious human rights abuses and excessive restrictions on freedom of speech and association by the government of Sri Lanka merit the country's removal from a list of eligible recipients for U.S. Millennium Challenge Account assistance.” We want to see a Millennium Challenge compact for Sri Lanka, but these problems must first be recognized and effectively addressed.

An international human rights field presence, under the auspices of the United Nations, could do much to improve the situation. Given the gravity and scale of the violations witnessed in Sri Lanka, and particularly the inability of the Sri Lankan Government to monitor the abuses taking place in areas held by the LTTE, such a presence would help protect lives, document abuses by all sides, and support the Government and civil society in protecting the civilian population. The