

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

DUNCAN HUNTER NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the House Armed Services Committee, I rise in support of this important legislation.

I applaud Chairman SKELTON for his leadership in guiding this bill to the floor today. He and Ranking Member HUNTER have done a tremendous job, and they have been ably supported by the expert staff of our committee. We passed the Defense Authorization bill in the House over four months ago—but there was concern that the Senate wouldn't pass its bill before Congress adjourned for the year.

Fortunately, the Senate acted last week, and we're able to move ahead today to complete this important annual task. Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER and their staff were not about to let this be the first Defense Authorization bill in 42 years not to become law. They worked very hard to reconcile the House and Senate legislation, and I commend them for the outcome. I expect the Senate to follow our lead and send this bill to the President for his signature.

This bill rightly focuses on our military's readiness needs. After more than five years at war, both the active duty and reserve forces are stretched to their limits. The bill will provide what's needed to respond, including funds to address equipment shortages for the active duty and reserve forces, improve the quality of our military barracks, maintain ammunition, and expand training opportunities, among other important readiness needs. The bill also improves the quality of life for our forces and their families by including a 3.9 percent pay raise for all service members, preserving important health benefits by prohibiting fee increases in TRICARE and the TRICARE pharmacy program, and including new preventive health care initiatives.

With regard to Colorado provisions, I am pleased that the bill includes language requiring the Secretary of Defense to maintain redundant facilities and equipment—along with the staff necessary to ensure continuity of operations—at Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station until the Secretary can certify that security measures have been instituted to bring the consolidated command center for NORTHCOM/NORAD at Peterson AFB into full compliance with Protection Level One requirements. Currently, the Secretary has waived compliance to allow Peterson to meet these requirements—defined as resulting in “the greatest possible deterrence against hostile acts” and providing “the maximum means to achieve detection, interception and defeat of a hostile force before it is able to seize, damage or destroy resources”—though Peter-

son AFB does not yet meet this level of protection. Such a waiver would not be permitted to meet the requirement under this legislation.

It is important that the House and the Senate have recognized that Northern Command's decision to relocate the nation's air and space defense command from Cheyenne Mountain to the new NORTHCOM/NORAD command center at Peterson AFB was flawed, particularly without fully analyzing the full range of threats. The Government Accountability Office in its recent report highlighted the lack of a comprehensive threat analysis, and the Department of Defense (DOD) finally concurred that a thorough analysis still needs to be completed. While that study is ongoing—and certainly while Peterson AFB cannot yet comply with protection level requirements for the highest level of threats—redundant operations should be maintained at Cheyenne Mountain.

I'm also pleased that the bill increases overall military construction project authorization at the Pueblo Chemical Depot by \$223 million, raising the five-year-old authorization cap that had forced the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternative (ACWA) program and its main contractor Bechtel to cancel some work earlier this year and would have resulted in layoffs if it had not been increased. Although Congress appropriated sufficient funds last year, ACWA did not have Congressional permission to spend the funds until this cap was raised.

Finally, the bill includes language that prohibits DOD from transporting away from the Pueblo Chemical Depot in the next six months the hazardous wastes left after chemical treatment of mustard agent. This is based on legislation I introduced with Rep. JOHN SALAZAR earlier this year, and sends an important message to the Department of Defense.

There is no question that the ACWA program has been poorly managed for years. But I believe the people of Pueblo shouldn't have to pay for DOD's mistakes. Pueblo needs the jobs that the biotreatment process will provide, and the community deserves the certainty that clean-up will be completed in a timely fashion. I am disappointed that the final language is not as strong as the language I helped pass in the House, but it is still an important step forward. I will continue to work to ensure the secondary wastes are not transported off-site.

The Pueblo Chemical Depot holds 2,611 tons of liquid mustard agent and is part of the DOD's ACWA program, which is responsible for destroying the chemical weapons stored at Pueblo and at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky. The Chemical Weapons Convention, ratified by Congress in 1997, requires these munitions to be destroyed by 2012. Because of schedule delays, management problems, and funding shortfalls for the ACWA program, the DOD has said that the U.S. will not meet the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty deadline.

Last year, Congress mandated that DOD complete all chemical weapons destruction activities by 2017. The DOD has suggested that a 2017 deadline at Pueblo cannot be reached if wastes are treated on-site. DOD is again

studying whether to transport these wastes for treatment off-site, despite approved plans to treat the wastes at the Pueblo Chemical Depot, and despite the fact that construction of an on-site biotreatment facility has already begun. In addition, studies have shown that shipping these wastes would not yield benefits. The community of Pueblo and the Colorado Citizens' Advisory Commission, established by law to represent community interests, have repeatedly expressed their preference for treating the wastes on-site.

The bill also authorizes \$474 million for military construction projects at Fort Carson, as well as \$65 million for construction at the Pueblo Chemical Depot, \$4.9 million for land acquisition at Peterson AFB, \$18 million for Colorado National Guard readiness centers in Denver and Grand Junction, \$3 million for a satellite pharmacy and \$4.2 million for Alert Crew Headquarters at Buckley Air Force Base, and \$18 million to upgrade academic facilities at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Mr. Speaker, the bill we are considering today does an excellent job of balancing the need to sustain our current warfighting abilities with the need to prepare for the next threat to our national security. It is critical that we are able to meet the operational demands of today even as we continue to prepare our men and women in uniform to be the best trained and equipped force in the world.

This is a good bill, a carefully drafted and bipartisan bill, and I urge its passage.

PROVIDING FOR AGREEMENT BY HOUSE WITH AMENDMENT TO SENATE AMENDMENT TO H.R. 2095, RAIL SAFETY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2095, the Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act and Amtrak Reauthorization bill. I congratulate Chairman OBERSTAR, Chairwoman BROWN, Ranking Member MICA, and Ranking Member SHUSTER for their bipartisan work on this bill.

H.R. 2095 is vital legislation for my district which has 160 trains traveling through it every day, 90 on the Union Pacific line and 70 on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe line. These trains carry approximately 14,000 containers every day, with many of them holding hazardous materials. This train traffic is expected to triple by 2020, which will mean a train every 10 minutes.

From October 2004 to May 2005, five derailments occurred in or near my district. These derailments damaged homes and businesses, threatened public safety and caused anxiety for those who lived and worked along the railroad.

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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