

outgoing, who cared deeply for his family. Army PVT Brent Currier, Eric's brother, describes him as the hero of his seven siblings.

Eric enlisted in the Marine Corps in March 2009 with a desire to serve an important cause and make his family proud. He most certainly accomplished those goals. Private First Class Currier selflessly joined the men and women of our armed services who give of themselves each day so that we, as a nation, might enjoy freedom and security. He has earned our country's enduring gratitude and recognition. While Eric's life may have ended too soon, his legacy lives on through the people who loved him and through all of us, who are forever indebted to him.

No words of mine can diminish the pain of losing such a young soldier, but I hope Eric's family can find solace in knowing that all Americans share a deep appreciation of his service. Daniel Webster's words, first spoken during his eulogy for Presidents Adams and Jefferson in 1826, are fitting: "Although no sculptured marble should rise to their memory, nor engraved stone bear record of their deeds, yet will their remembrance be as lasting as the land they honored." I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in honoring Eric's life, service and sacrifice.

Private First Class Currier is survived by his wife Kaila; his father Russell Currier; his mother Helen Boudreau and her husband Kevin; siblings Brent, Dylan, Kevin, Melana, Cassie, Jake and Alyssa; as well as grandparents, in-laws, and others. I offer my deepest sympathies to his entire family for their loss, and my sincere thanks for their loved one's service. This young marine will be dearly missed; his death while deployed far from home is another painful loss for our small State and for this Nation. It is my sad duty to enter the name of PFC Eric Currier in the RECORD of the U.S. Senate in recognition of his sacrifice for this country and his contribution to freedom and lasting peace.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, due to mechanical trouble that delayed my travel to the Senate on March 15, 2010, I regret I was unable to make the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2847, the legislative vehicle of the HIRE Act. If present I would have voted aye.

TAIWAN SELF-DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, Taiwan is a steadfast ally in a very turbulent region of the world. On January 29, the State Department approved a \$6.4 billion arms package to Taiwan that includes 114 Patriot missiles, 60 Black

Hawk helicopters, Harpoon antiship training missiles, and Osprey-class minehunter ships.

I am pleased that the administration is taking this important step toward fulfilling the United States' commitment to Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act, TRA, which requires us to make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services "as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability." However, despite the billions of dollars worth of weapons involved in this sale, it represents little more than a half step in providing Taiwan the defensive arms that it needs—and that we are obligated by law to provide it—to protect itself against rapidly increasing air- and sea-based threats from China. What Taiwan has repeatedly requested—and what was not in the arms package—are new fighter aircraft.

Since 2006, the Taiwanese have made clear their desire to purchase 66 F-16 C/Ds to augment an air fleet that is bordering on obsolescence. On April 22, 2009, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou reiterated Taiwan's commitment to request the F-16C/Ds from the Obama Administration. And, in a December 29, 2009, letter to Senate and House leaders, members of Taiwan's Parliament stated, "Though economic and diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China's Communist Party are improving, we face a significant threat from the People's Liberation Army Air Force. Our military must be able to defend our airspace as a further deterioration in the air balance across the Strait will only encourage PRC aggression."

On January 21, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, DIA, completed a report on the current condition of Taiwan's air force. This formal assessment was required under a provision that I authored in the fiscal year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, which received bipartisan support. The report's findings are grim.

The unclassified version of the report concludes that, although Taiwan has an inventory of almost 400 combat aircraft, "far fewer of these are operationally capable." It states that Taiwan's 60 U.S.-made F-5 fighters have already reached the end of their operational service, that its 126 locally produced Indigenous Defense Fighter aircraft lack "the capability for sustained sorties," and that its 56 French-made Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets "require frequent, expensive maintenance" while lacking required spare parts. Furthermore, the report found that although some of Taiwan's 146 F-16 A/Bs may receive improvements to enhance avionics and combat effectiveness, the "extent of the upgrades, and timing and quantity of aircraft is currently unknown."

In the past, what has kept Taiwan free and allowed its democracy and free enterprise system to flourish has been a qualitative technological advantage in military hardware over Chinese

forces. In simple terms, it would have been too costly for Beijing to contemplate an attack on Taiwan. This in and of itself created a stabilizing effect that promoted dialogue and negotiations. Yet due to the massive, non-transparent increase in China's defense spending, the past 10 years have seen a dramatic erosion in this cornerstone of Taiwan's defense strategy. A gauge of how quickly this tide has turned can be found in the Department of Defense's Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China. The 2002 version of this report concluded that Taiwan "has enjoyed dominance of the airspace over the Taiwan Strait for many years." The DOD's 2009 Report now states this conclusion no longer holds true.

Taiwanese defense officials have also recognized this alarming trend, predicting that, in the coming decade, they will completely lose their qualitative edge. Beijing will have an advantage in both troops and arms. This imminent reality holds critical consequences for both our ally Taiwan and the United States. If China becomes emboldened, it might be tempted to try to take Taiwan through outright aggression or cow Taiwan into subservience through intimidation.

How would the U.S. react in the face of Chinese belligerence towards Taiwan? Would we deploy our ships and aircraft to ward off Chinese aggression? Would we decide to counter force with force? These are difficult and tough questions, and the soundest policy option is to ensure they never have to be answered. We know a Taiwan that is properly defended and equipped will raise the stakes for China, and that would serve as the best defense against belligerent acts.

Strategically, assisting Taiwan in maintaining a robust defense capability will help keep the Taiwan Strait stable. We should remember that, in 1996, Beijing rattled its Chinese saber and launched ballistic missiles off Taiwan's coast and initiated amphibious landing training exercises. This prompted President Clinton to dispatch two carrier battle groups as a show of strength. President Ma recently commented on the latest weapons sale by stating, "The more confidence we have and the safer we feel, the more interactions we can have with mainland China. The new weapons will help us develop cross-strait ties and ensure Taiwan maintains a determined defense and effective deterrence." During the Reagan years, we knew this common-sense strategy as "Peace Through Strength."

The benefits of an F-16 sale to Taiwan are not limited to national security—this sale also stands to benefit the American economy during a difficult period. The F-16, one of the world's finest tactical aircraft, is proudly assembled in Fort Worth, TX. The overall production effort involves hundreds of suppliers and thousands of workers across the United States. The