Furthermore, the U.S.-South Korean alliance is distinct. With a mutual defense treaty dating back to 1953, Korea and the U.S. form perhaps the most integrated alliance of interoperable forces I think that exist in the world. On the Korean peninsula, interoperability is not just a buzz word. It is a real-life practice that passage of this legislation would help cement. U.S. and Korean soldiers need to be operating, frankly, on American equipment.

South Korea is a larger foreign military sales partner than any of the NATO+3 members. Last year, Seoul purchased $3.7 billion worth of American defense equipment, making it one of the largest partners in U.S. foreign military sales. And this has led South Korea to formally request this preferential status through its Foreign Ministry and its Defense Ministry. Indeed, South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak raised this legislation when he met with congressional leaders here last spring.

As our alliance has matured, the Koreans are rightly on the path towards assuming the lead for their own defense. With that, Korea plans to invest $290 billion in military hardware over the next dozen years. Without updating our laws to reflect the strategic nature of our relationship, we run the risk of South Korea looking to other suppliers as it continues its defense transformation, perhaps jeopardizing interoperability of our U.S. forces that work with the Korean forces. So today, we can help prevent that from happening, while at the same time benefiting the strength of this alliance.

I urge adoption of the legislation. I thank the chairman and ranking member for their support in bringing it to the floor.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5443.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REQUIRING CONSULTATIONS ON U.S.-TAIWAN ARMS SALES TALKS

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6646) to require the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to provide detailed briefings to Congress on any recent discussions conducted between United States Government and the Government of Taiwan and any potential transfer of defense articles or defense services to the Government of Taiwan, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6646

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Relations between the United States and Taiwan are governed by the Taiwan Relations Act (22 U.S.C. 3301 et seq.; Public Law 96–8), three joint communiques, and the Six Assurances.

(2) The Taiwan Relations Act has governed United States arms sales to Taiwan since 1979, when the United States extended diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China.

(3) The Taiwan Relations Act specifies that it is United States policy, among other things, to consider any nonpeaceful means to determine Taiwan's future ''a threat'' to the peace and security of the Western Pacific and of ''grave concern'' to the United States, ''to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character'', and ''to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion'' jeopardizing the security or social or economic system of Taiwan's people.

(4) Section 3(a) of the Taiwan Relations Act states that ''the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability''.

(5) Section 3(b) of the Taiwan Relations Act stipulates that both the President and the Congress shall determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles and services ''based solely'' upon their judgment of the needs of Taiwan.

(6) Taiwan has recently reversed a downward trend in defense spending with a $2.2 billion increase in 2007 to $9.8 billion and the Defense Ministry has requested and the Executive Yuan approved a 2008 budget of $10.6 billion, an increase of 15 percent.

(7) According to the Congressional Research Service, the executive branch has yet to send any arms transfer notifications to Congress during calendar year 2008, including notifications on at least seven pending arms sales programs with a total value of about $11 billion that encompass programs on a submarine design, Patriot PAC–3 missile defense systems, and Apache and Blackhawk helicopters.

(8) Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou stated on July 12, 2008, that the island needs to secure defensive weapons from the United States, despite a warming of relations with mainland China.

(9) On July 16, 2008, Admiral Timothy Keating, Commander of the Hawaii-based United States Pacific Command, acknowledged that the executive branch had imposed a ''freeze'' on arms sales to Taiwan, a decision that is in contradiction to longstanding United States law and policy.

SEC. 2. MANDATORY CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFINGS.

(a) BRIEFINGS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and not later than 120 days thereafter, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall provide detailed briefings to Congress on—

(1) any discussions conducted between any executive branch agency and the Government of Taiwan during the covered period; and

(2) any potential transfer of defense articles or defense services to the Government of Taiwan.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COVERED PERIOD.—The term ''covered period'' means—

(A) with respect to the initial briefings required under subsection (a), the period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act and ending on the date of the initial briefings; and

(B) with respect to the subsequent briefings required under subsection (a), the period beginning on the day after the date of the initial briefings required under subsection (a) and ending on the date of the subsequent briefings.

(2) EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCY.—The term ''executive branch agency'' has the meaning given the term ''agency'' in section 551(1) of title 5, United States Code.

(3) DEFENSE ARTICLE.—The term ''defense article'' has the meaning given the term in section 47 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2794 note).

(4) DEFENSE SERVICE.—The term ''defense service'' has the meaning given the term in section 47 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2794 note).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I would like to first thank my distinguished colleague, the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, for introducing this very, very important legislation.

When it comes to arms sales to Taiwan, U.S. policy is clear. We must ensure that the thriving democracy of Taiwan has the military capability necessary to defend itself from outside threats.

The United States is obligated to provide defensive military equipment to Taiwan, not just because it is right to aid our democratic friends, but also because it is the law of the land under the Taiwan Relations Act.

This act, which has been at the core of our policy towards Taiwan for almost three decades, clearly states that the United States should base its decision whether to supply defensive military equipment to Taiwan solely on the security needs of the Taiwanese military.

The Taiwan Relations Act is also clear that it is the President and Congress that determine what military equipment shall be sold to Taiwan. Apparently, the White House does not understand the Taiwan Relations Act.

As we speak, the administration is refusing to move forward with $11 billion worth of arms to Taiwan, arms which the administration has already

agreed to sell. The Taiwanese government wants the weapons, and the administration has recommended that the sales be approved. The only thing remaining is for the administration to notify Congress, and yet, no notification has come.

To address this peculiar situation, over the past months the Foreign Affairs Committee has repeatedly requested briefings from the administration. Most often, the answer is simply no response. When pressed, State Department and other administration officials throw up their hands and tell us to ask the White House because it is the White House that is making the decision to delay notification of the sales and not to talk to Congress.

H.R. 6646 requires the administration to brief the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on all discussions that the administration has had with the Taiwanese Government regarding the arms sales and on any potential transfer of defense equipment to Taiwan.

I would like to point out the extraordinary measure we are taking by introducing this legislation. Section 15(b) of the State Department Basic Authorities Act provides that the Department ''shall keep the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives fully and currently informed with respect to all activities and responsibilities within the jurisdiction.'' With respect to these arms sales to Taiwan, this law has been ignored.

Because of the importance of the U.S.-Taiwan relationship and the importance of the Taiwan Relations Act, which has helped keep peace in East Asia for almost 30 years, it is time for Congress to take a more direct step in compelling the administration to explain its decision-making on arms sales to Taiwan.

The stakes are too high to let the White House continue its policies of secrecy and disregard for congressional oversight. It is an injustice to our Taiwanese friends. It is a danger to our national security, and it is against the law.

I strongly support this legislation and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I want to just begin by thanking Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, our distinguished ranking member on Foreign Affairs, for bringing this bill up before us. And, of course, this bill requires the State Department to provide detailed briefings to Congress on defense sales to the Government of Taiwan.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's clear to us Taiwan and the U.S. have a long and valued partnership. Taiwan is one of the few, very vibrant democracies in the region, in Asia, and we continue to build on our already strong economic partnership that we have with that country. Taiwan is an important ally, and we have long considered its security a priority. We have commitments there with regard to that security.

That is why this administration's decision to sit on an arms package worth approximately $11 billion is of concern. Today, the People's Republic of China continues to expand its military capabilities, amassing hundreds of short-range missiles pointed across the strait. Now they're pointed at Taiwan.

Now some of us support arms sales to Taiwan. Others may not. But we can all agree, I think, that Congress should be involved in this process. The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, legislation that governs U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, stipulates that both the President and Congress, this body, shall determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Congress has been left out. This bill, however, helps right that wrong, and I commend its author, Ranking Member ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, for bringing this bill before us today, and I urge its passage.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H.R. 6646, a bill to require the executive branch to provide quarterly briefings to Congress on possible defense transfers from the United States to Taiwan.

At the outset, I'd like to thank Chairman HOWARD BERMAN and the leadership on both sides for helping to expedite consideration of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this is a modest bill. It requires the executive branch again to regularly brief Congress on our policy toward Taiwan and, in particular, the defense needs of Taiwan and the security balance across the strait.

Why is this bill even necessary? Well, it's necessary because a long-rumored freeze on United States foreign military sales to Taiwan was confirmed on July 16 by Admiral Timothy Keating, the commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific.

According to press accounts of his remarks at the Heritage Foundation, Admiral Keating observed that there have been ''no significant arms sales from the U.S. to Taiwan in relatively recent times,'' and that the absence of arms sales under the Foreign Military Sales process reflected ''administration policy.''

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Admiral Keating went on to suggest that he had, in fact, discussed the issue of Taiwan arms sales with leaders in Beijing, noting that, ''The Chinese have made clear to me their concerns over any arms sales to Taiwan.''

I found Admiral Keating's remarks at the Heritage Foundation affirming that there was, in fact, a ''freeze'' on arms sales to Taiwan to be a cause for great concern. Even more disturbing was the Admiral's indication that the Chinese leadership had had some input into the decision of the United States about Taiwan's defensive needs and our commitment to Taiwan under our laws.

The Taiwan Relations Act gives Congress a clear role in the provision of defensive weapons to Taiwan. President Reagan's ''Six Assurances'' to Taiwan was a solemn commitment made over a quarter century ago making it clear that there should be no pre-consultation with Beijing on this matter. However, it seems that, while Congress has been left in the dark on this issue—which is of vital concern to our national security interests—the Chinese leadership has been kept fully abreast of our Nation's intentions.

Last year, the House passed a resolution that I put forward which declared, ''It shall continue to be the policy of the United States, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, to make available to Taiwan such defense articles and services as may be necessary for Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.'' That remains my firm position.

The legitimate defense needs of our friends in Taiwan must be met no matter who attended the Beijing Olympics nor how helpful the State Department says that China has been in the talks with North Korea. That is the clear intention of the Taiwan Relations Act. That is the clear commitment that President Reagan gave to Taiwan. On this matter, Mr. Speaker, there can be no backsliding or compromise.

I hope and I trust that this bill can be passed swiftly prior to congressional adjournment and thereby alleviate some of the confusion over this so-called arms ''freeze.''

For almost 30 years, the judicious sale of defensive weapons has been an essential element in the United States support for a secure, stable and democratic Taiwan as well as for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Now is not the time to backtrack from that historic and bipartisan policy.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress should do everything in its power to ensure that Taiwan will continue as a beacon of democracy shining its light directly across the strait in the very heart of Tiananmen Square.

I urge support of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Nevada, Ms. SHELLEY BERKLEY.

Ms. BERKLEY. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for her strong leadership on this issue.

I will not speak long, Mr. Speaker, because this issue could not be more simple to understand.

I rise today as a proud cosponsor of this bill and as co-chairman of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus.

Mr. Speaker, this administration talks about spreading democracy and expanding liberty. In the case of Taiwan, we don't need to topple a dictator in order to show our support for one of the world's most embattled democracies, we simply need to help them protect themselves. And yet we cannot get this administration to tell us if they in fact will deliver the arms that they have already promised to Taiwan. Will they allow Taiwan to acquire the weapons they need, or will this administration continue to curry favor with the Chinese and refuse to help our democratic ally in its time of need?

We have written letters, Members of this body have made statements, and now we're passing a law just to get simple answers from the President of the United States. We cannot and should not wait any longer. Taiwan and its democratic citizens ought not have to wait any longer. Let us deliver the arms that we have promised to the Taiwan people.

I urge support for this bill.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6646, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UNITED STATES COMMITMENT TO PRESERVATION OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL SITES

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 255) expressing the sense of Congress regarding the United States commitment to preservation of religious and cultural sites and condemning instances where sites are desecrated, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 255

Whereas the Congress is committed to protecting and preserving the cultural heritage of all national, religious, and ethnic groups, including sacred sites of such groups, including cemeteries in the United States and abroad;

Whereas the Holocaust annihilated much of Europe's Jewish population and in many countries, none were left to care for the communal properties that represent a historic culture in the area and constitute an integral part of the Jewish religion;

Whereas the Holocaust and 45 years of atheistic, Communist governments created a critical need that led to the establishment of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad;

Whereas the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad is tasked with identifying and reporting on cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings in Eastern and Central Europe that are associated with the heritage of United States citizens and obtaining assurances from the governments of those regions that the properties will be protected and preserved;

Whereas the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad has in effect over 20 bilateral agreements between the United States and foreign governments assuring the protection and preservation of cultural property;

Whereas many properties continue to be endangered and many governments and communities continue to face fundamental and compelling challenges in the preservation of these properties;

Whereas Congress is outraged by the construction that occurred within the perceived boundaries of the historic Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania;

Whereas cemeteries are sacred sites and are established to remain undisturbed in perpetuity, and the sanctity of a cemetery is determined by the bodies buried therein;

Whereas construction of a commercial building on the site disgraces the cemetery, it does not change its status;

Whereas experts within Lithuania and from around the world community believe that the cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, is a Jewish cemetery and is therefore sacred ground;

Whereas the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, is known by scholars within Lithuania and from around the world as the first Jewish cemetery in Vilnius and dates back to the 15th century, and it is believed that before the government closed the cemetery in the early 1800s, more than 50,000 Jews were buried there;

Whereas the fact that the Government of Lithuania has allowed construction to take place within the perceived boundaries of the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, and that desecration continues into the 21st century is an affront to the international Jewish community, the American people, and everyone who values religious freedom and ethnic diversity around the world;

Whereas the failure of the Government of Lithuania to protect the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, violates the October 15, 2002, bilateral agreement between Lithuania and the United States on the protection and preservation of certain cultural properties, including cemeteries;

Whereas specifically, Article 1 of the bilateral agreement states: ''[E]ach party will take appropriate steps to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of all national, religious, or ethnic groups that reside or resided in its territory, including victims of genocide during the Second World War. The term 'cultural heritage' for purposes of this agreement means '. . . cemeteries, and memorials to the dead. . .' ''; and

Whereas Congress welcomed the decision by the Government of Lithuania to conduct a geophysical survey of the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, in the summer of 2008 to establish definitively the boundaries of the cemetery, as well as to designate the land as a cultural heritage site: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) expresses strong support for the work of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and for the European countries that continue to work to preserve sacred historical sites, despite ongoing challenges;

(2) expresses strong sentiments to the Government of Lithuania that the people of the United States believe the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, must not be desecrated;

(3) calls on the Government of Lithuania to give serious consideration to the recommendations being prepared by the international experts group on the basis of the geophysical survey of the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, and to take steps that guarantee the permanent preservation of the cemetery site, including the possibility of placing the land under government ownership; and

(4) declares that constructive bilateral relations between Lithuania and the United States are important to the governments, citizens, and shared agendas of both countries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution and yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I want to thank our colleague, Mr. FERGUSON of New Jersey, for introducing this resolution that draws congressional attention to an ongoing dispute in Lithuania about construction on the grounds of a former Jewish cemetery in that country. I would also like to thank my good friend, Representative ROS-LEHTINEN, for her leadership on this issue, and recognize the efforts of Representative SHIMKUS in seeking to find a constructive solution to this problem.

One of many tragic consequences of the Holocaust was the decimation of Jewish populations that would otherwise have cared for communal property that represents an important part of Europe's history. The Jewish cemetery in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, is just one example. Archival documents suggest it was established as Vilnius's first Jewish cemetery in the 15th century, served as the burial place for more than 50,000 Jews, and was closed by Czarist Russia in 1831.

As part of our ongoing dialogue with Lithuania regarding the 2002 U.S.-Lithuanian agreement on the preservation of the cultural property of the victims of the Nazi regime, Congress has been concerned about construction on perceived boundary lines of this cemetery.