

should be, we are the superpower. People should have, however, a reason to anticipate that our position will be based on policy.

Mr. President, I think we find ourselves in a very difficult position, one in which honest people can disagree. I happen to believe it is a mistake for us to put U.S. troops on the ground there, a mistake in terms of policy, a mistake in terms of alternatives. There are alternatives. It is not that or nothing.

We can continue to be involved with diplomacy. We can continue to support NATO. We can give other kinds of support there. It is a question of what happens when we leave. What do we do to ensure that having spent whatever it is—I suspect even though the administration says \$1.5 billion, maybe plus \$600 million in nation building, a little over \$2 billion, I would be willing to bet you that is not right. We spent nearly that much in Haiti, and this place will be three times as expensive.

So the question is, what is the basis, what is the rationale for that kind of commitment? I hope we have an opportunity to discuss it soon. I had hoped we would this week. Apparently, it will be next week. We ought to keep in mind the mass troop movement has not taken place. We have some folks in there, some troops in there early to prepare, but the troops are not there. We still need to make a decision. We still need to say to the President, if that is what we believe, that we think this is the wrong decision. No one here, however, will resist supporting troops once they are there. We are not talking about that at this point; we are talking about the decision to be there. It is a tough one. We should face up to it, come to the snubbing post and make decisions. I am sorry we have not made them before now. We shall. It is our responsibility.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. GRASSLEY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY, is recognized.

OPERATIONAL TESTING AND EVALUATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to address the Senate for just maybe 3 or 4 minutes, 5 or 6 at the most, on something that Senator PRYOR and Senator ROTH have already addressed, something that we three have worked on over quite a few years. It deals with a matter of defense and an operation within defense that is going to make sure that we get the most money for our defense dollar and to make sure that a weapon system that we are producing is effective and safe.

Mr. President, I am amazed that I have to stand before you to say what I am about to say. I never thought I would have to rise to speak out to defend this program. But, then again, I continue to be astonished by the shortsighted and misguided actions of so many people in this town.

Nearly 12 years ago, there was a bipartisan effort to create the Office of Operational Test and Evaluation [OT&E] at the Department of Defense. OT&E was created in response to a very simple idea: We should not spend billions of dollars of the taxpayers money before we know that a weapons works and will be safe and effective for our men and women in uniform.

The OT&E Office has been an unqualified success. It has saved the taxpayers billions. The cancellation of that boondoggle, the Sgt. York [DIVAD] antiaircraft weapon, was due in part to the work of OT&E. Canceling the DIVAD saved the taxpayers billions. More important, it ensured we didn't give our soldiers poor, unsafe equipment.

But far more important, OT&E has saved lives. There is no question that the modifications made to the Bradley fighting vehicle to enhance its survivability ensured that many young soldiers came home from the Persian Gulf.

Former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said that the vigorous, independent testing oversight put in place with the creation of OT&E by Congress saved more lives than perhaps any other single initiative.

Now, what is our response to these accolades? To these successes? Why of course, we get rid of it. Incredibly this is actually being proposed right now by the DOD authorization conferees.

OT&E asks the tough questions on weapons effectiveness, and it looks closely at the answers. It does this independent of the services and the procurement bureaucracy at the Pentagon. So why would we want to eliminate this important check and balance?

Simply put, OT&E is a vital check in ensuring that the taxpayers get the best bang for the buck and that the safety of our troops is the top priority.

The people who are clamoring to get rid of OT&E are upset because OT&E is a roadblock to their top priority: ripping the money sacks open at both ends, and pitchforking dollars to defense contractors as quickly as possible.

These are people who must believe DOD exists merely as an expressway to pad the coffers of contractors. And they want to get rid of this small speed bump, the Office of Operational Test and Evaluation, because it slows down the flow of money.

Mr. President, I am particularly saddened that this is happening under a Republican Congress. I have been assured by Republican House leaders that Pentagon reform is around the corner, even though in the DOD authorization bill we are throwing more money at the Pentagon. But I must say, if this is their idea of reform, they'll have an unexpected battle on their flank. And I'll be leading the charge once again, just as I did in the mid-1980's. And we will win again.

House Republicans say they want to reform the Pentagon so much that it

will become a triangle. This action undermines any claims by Republicans in the Congress that they are for reforming the Pentagon.

I am very fearful that this Congress has badly confused its principles. Being for a strong defense means ensuring that our troops get the safest and most effective weapons for our troops. It does not mean ensuring only a steady and increasing cash flow for defense contractors.

And let me say, while the actions of the Congress are inexcusable, the administration's actions are no better.

We have heard not a word from the administration about the elimination of OT&E. How the administration, in the middle of sending our troops into Bosnia, can sit idly by and say and do nothing while OT&E is being eliminated is beyond comprehension. What kind of signal does that send to our troops?

Mr. President, as I said at the beginning of my speech, I am astonished that I am standing on the Senate floor having to debate this issue. This is a sad day for the taxpayers and even a sadder day for our troops.

I strongly hope the conferees will reconsider this disastrous proposal and not bring the DOD authorization bill to the floor until it is resolved.

I also wish to commend my colleagues, Senator ROTH and Senator PRYOR, for their staunch support for this office, both at its creation, and especially now. Their eloquent speeches on this floor earlier today speak to their leadership on this issue. And I would like to add my support to their effort to give our troops the very best equipment for their safety.

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FLAG DESECRATION CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, it is unfortunate that the Democrats will not let us get beyond the motion to proceed on Senate Joint Resolution 31, the proposed constitutional amendment to grant power to the Congress and the States, the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States. This is an important issue which should be submitted to the American people in the form of a proposed constitutional amendment.

Mr. President, today we begin consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 31, a proposed constitutional amendment authorizing the Congress and the States to prohibit the physical desecration of the American flag. I am pleased