

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRAGIC FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO COMMUNISM

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 1998

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, today it seems fitting that with the 23rd anniversary of the fall of Saigon to Communism, special recognition of the memories, feelings, and introspections regarding April 30, 1975, are in order. We must pay special tribute and remember the sacrifices of our soldiers and our Vietnam Veterans who fought and died in the name of freedom and democracy.

Many Vietnamese experienced first hand the deprivation, humiliation, and fear associated with losing their country, their way of life, and their freedom. But all who left their Vietnamese homeland to come to the United States chose a life filled with uncertainty, change, and struggle over a life in their homeland under a Communist thumb.

While I am at home visiting with my constituents, I am disheartened by the stories of their experiences during that conflict. It is often difficult to fully appreciate the extent to which these diligent people have survived all manner of disasters and trauma and have gone on to lead civil and productive lives.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to be vigilant to keep this memory alive in our hearts. We must tell the story of their brave sacrifices to our children and our children's children. We must ensure that the important cause that we fought for is not forgotten by future generations.

COMBATING TERRORISM: TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE; COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 1998

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, April 23, 1998, I testified before the Subcommittee on National Security, International Affairs, and Criminal Justice; Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. On this occasion, I discussed a series of reports, prepared at my request by the General Accounting Office (GAO). These reports detail the United States' substantial efforts to combat terrorism. I share my remarks with the Members of the House.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT, APRIL 23, 1998

Chairman Hastert, members of the subcommittee, it gives me great pleasure to appear before you today. I appreciate the opportunity not only to speak about an important issue to our nation but also to bring attention to a substantial body of work produced by the General Accounting Office (GAO). This "work in progress"—to date, a series of four reports—will eventually produce the most comprehensive overview of our nation's effort to combat terrorism. As Chairman Hastert knows all too well, this is a daunting task. Without his leadership and effort, we would have a far more vague picture of our government's activities. Let me briefly review these recent findings.

First, GAO released a July 1997 report entitled, "Combating Terrorism: Status of DoD Efforts to Protect Its Forces Overseas." Dealing with Anti-terrorism, this report concluded that uniform security standards were necessary to assure the safety of Americans around the world.

Second, GAO released a September 1997 report entitled, "Combating Terrorism: Federal Agencies' Efforts to Implement National Security Policy and Strategy." Focused on Counterterrorism—or those offensive measures for deterring, resolving, and managing terrorist acts—this second report represents the first comprehensive examination of federal activities to combat terrorism. It pointed out that more than 40 federal departments, agencies, and bureaus, are involved in this activity. It also outlined specific roles and responsibilities of federal agencies, as well as their respective capabilities.

GAO released its third report in December of 1997. Focused on total government-wide spending levels to combat terrorism, this product—and the process leading up to its publication—closely tracked with congressional interest in the subject. As many of you know, during floor consideration of the fiscal year (FY) 1998 Defense Authorization Bill, an amendment—my amendment—was accepted to require the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to disclose overall spending levels directed against terrorism. Known as Section 1051 and taken together with GAO's third report, enough evidence surfaced to offer both encouragement and concern. Although it seemed that a significant amount of resources were annually committed to combat terrorism, the following inefficiencies were exposed:

No regular government-wide collection and review of funding data existed;

No apparent government-wide priorities were established;

No assessment process existed to coordinate and focus government efforts; and

No government office or entity maintained the authority to enforce coordination.

As a result, the third report recommended that the National Security Council (NSC), OMB, the departments, and agency heads—such as the State Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—build upon the new statutory requirement embodied in Section 1051. I am also pleased to report that this remains an annual obligation, requiring by March of each year an annual overview of government-wide efforts to combat terrorism around the globe.

Finally, at the request of Chairman Hastert and myself, GAO has recently released its fourth and latest product on the subject, entitled "Combating Terrorism: Threat and Risk Assessments Can Help Prioritize and Target Investments." Again, enough evidence has been provided to question the federal government's level of funding. This last report—responsible for reviewing the implementation of the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici domestic response program—hopefully will assist with the establishment of consistent national standards and priorities.

THE THREAT

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee: In your mind's eye, join me and imagine what it was like in 1995 for the Senior Airman at a remote location in a foreign land, relaxing after a long, hot, stressful day in the Arabian desert;

Imagine, too, what it was like in 1996 for the federal employee beginning the day in Oklahoma, pouring coffee, grabbing a breakfast snack, and preparing for morning briefings;

Imagine what it was like in 1993 for Americans—businesswomen, diplomats, tourists, visitors—milling innocently about in the heart of New York City, one of our nation's busiest locations;

Imagine, if you can, what it was like for these individuals before these three locations became infamous for the catastrophic events that followed. To a person, none expected anything but completion of an average day; yet all experienced a jolt, a shock, a sense of horror, as chaos and bedlam brought an abrupt halt to their respective routines.

The bombing victims at Khobar Towers in Saudia Arabia were trained military professionals in a foreign land. The bombing victims at the Oklahoma City Federal Building and the World Trade Center, were average American citizens—civilians—at home in their communities, totally unprepared for the violence they were forced to experience.

Despite the different circumstances, all three events share in common one unavoidable, tell-tale truth: Americans died brutally, without warning, unnecessarily, and in a manner that will almost certainly be imitated in the future. In 1995 and 1996, about one-fourth of all international terrorist acts were against U.S. targets; and although the number of terrorist incidents both worldwide and in the United States has declined in recent years, the level of violence and lethality of attacks has increased. Violent events in the past, may encourage further attempts to strike America in places such as our own yards, back home in our districts, and other places where attacks might be least expected. Enemies of the United States, I fear, have adopted effective methods and means to strike against America.

Surely, enemies to America—both foreign and domestic—recognize the military capabilities of the United States. It is hard to ignore our successes throughout history and around the globe; it is difficult not to marvel at our technological advancements; and it is nearly impossible to overlook our massive military might at sea, in the air, and on the ground. Our naval, air, ground, and Marine forces remain superior and unmatched in today's world.

Further, enemies to America—both foreign and domestic—almost certainly recognize

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