

bill. Every year their Subcommittee does the vitally important work of balancing the multitude of priorities that make up this nation's defense. Their work becomes more important every year as our nation leaves behind the more predictable Cold War era.

I am pleased that this bill contains full funding for the second New Attack Submarine. This highly capable and relatively inexpensive class of submarines will take a lead role in the defense of this nation well into the 21st century. This submarine is exactly the type of military asset that we will rely on in the years to come. It is multi-mission capable, it will make use of new technology as it develops, and it will be able to remain on station at all corners of the earth.

This bill also provides for the helicopter needs of the Army and the National Guard. Both the Blackhawk and the Comanche helicopter programs achieved significant increases beyond the President's request. This year, strong Congressional support brought the number of Blackhawk-type helicopters from the 22 requested by the Administration to 34. I hope that as the Administration develops the Fiscal Year 2000 defense budget, it will take into account the fact that the Army, Navy, and National Guard need these helicopters sooner rather than later. We need 36 helicopters per year to fulfill requirements expeditiously and to trigger the savings that would come from a purchase of that size. The Comanche helicopter, still in development, enjoys a similar level of Congressional support that is matched only by the support it enjoys at the Pentagon. This bill's support for the Comanche is reassuring.

I am particularly pleased that two amendments that I offered to this bill were accepted. The first will expand the Defense Department's programs aimed at monitoring and researching Lyme Disease. The disease is a serious problem in the Northeast and is listed by the Defense Department as a militarily significant disease for troops stationed within the United States and deployed worldwide. The sooner we confront this disease with the necessary resources, the sooner the Defense Department and this nation will be able to avoid the significant losses from this terrible disease.

Also, I am glad that the Senate included my amendment that will eliminate the delay in processing Army pensions. All military retirees are due a pension and medical benefits beginning at age 60. My amendment will ensure that pensioners receive their payments and benefits on time. Mr. Arthur Greenberg, of Hamden, Connecticut, first brought this problem to my attention several weeks ago. He wrote a letter to me and stated that the Army had told him that he would not receive his pension or medical benefits until nine months after his 60th birthday. To my surprise, Mr. Greenberg's case was not an isolated incident. The Army told me

that 40% of its caseload was backlogged. This is absolutely unsatisfactory, and that is why I put this amendment forward. This amendment directs the Secretary of the Army to eliminate the backlog by the end of this calendar year and to submit a report to Congress on the matter. I fully expect that those who put their lives at risk to defend this nation will soon begin to receive their pensions and benefits, as expected, on their 60th birthday.

In sum, this bill is a responsible effort to provide for the national defense for Fiscal Year 1999. The New Attack Submarine, Comanche and Blackhawk helicopters, F-22 and F/A-18 fighters, C-17 cargo aircraft, and the many other assets that this bill funds are vitally important to protecting our way of life and our interests throughout the world. As usual, the men and women in my home state of Connecticut, whether they serve in the military or in the defense industry, will play important roles with respect to this bill. Overall, I support this bill, and I am glad that this body has nearly unanimously agreed on it.●

IDAHO'S 116TH—THE SNAKE RIVER BRIGADE

● Mr. KEMPTHORNE. Mr. President, I rise today to offer my praise for the men and women of the Idaho National Guard as they prepare to complete their exercise at our nation's crown jewel for desert warfare training.

It is, Mr. President, the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California. It is in those harsh and challenging conditions that our Army and National Guard personnel receive the best training of any armed force in the world.

I had the pleasure of spending this past weekend with the 116th Cavalry Brigade of the Idaho Army National Guard as they conducted Operation Desert Avenger at the NTC. The 116th, also called the Snake River Brigade, is only the second National Guard brigade to train at NTC in eight years. And from what I saw, Mr. President, they are more than holding their own.

Under the leadership of The Adjutant General, Major General Jack Kane, Brigade Commander Colonel Lawrence LaFrenz, Sergeant Major Austin Cummins and Brigade Sergeant Major Patrick Murphy, the men and women of the 116th have set an example that all future National Guard units will be hard-pressed to match.

Mr. President, the Snake River Brigade spent over two years preparing for their training rotation at NTC. Not only was there the logistical problems associated with getting more than 1,700 Idahoans and their equipment to California, but they supplemented the Idaho Guard with units from 41 other states and Canada. Nearly 5,000 men and women of the National Guard are taking part in Operation Desert Avenger. One can only imagine the myriad of details that had to be handled to make

this exercise a success. Think of all the planning that had to be done years ahead of the actual training. Mr. President, under the guidance of the Adjutant General and his staff, I believe Idaho's 116th Brigade has developed the model for how Guard units should prepare for this high intensity training.

Not only was the Snake River Brigade prepared, they performed above expectations. While these training exercises are not a test, the performance is observed and evaluated. The goal is to make the leadership and troops perform to the best of their ability. On the day I visited, the 116th beat the opposition forces. That is significant. Active duty Army units that come to NTC on a regular basis that don't do that. Those Idahoans can now go home with their heads held high. Talking with the tank crews, artillery units and support teams later, you can see the devotion they have and how high morale is. I'll tell you, Mr. President, had there been a National Guard recruiter on the field right after that battle, many of those soldiers would have immediately signed up for another tour of duty.

All Idahoans can be proud of the citizen-soldiers of the Snake River Brigade, and I would like to salute them here in the United States Senate.

These men and women are on call, prepared to defend our freedom. Mr. President, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the families of these patriots, who support them at home, and to the employers, who allow them the time away from work to attend training like NTC.●

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE, HELD IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ON JUNE 28-JULY 2, 1998

● Mr. LEAHY. The role of women in the production and development of the global agriculture system has historically been largely overlooked. Women, however, are an indispensable part of the system, producing 65% of the world's food supply. They have historically held the primary burden for the production, acquisition, and preparation of food for their households. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, in Africa women produce up to 80% of the total food supply.

Women contribute a great deal to the agricultural backbone upon which we all rely, and yet they too often go without praise or thanks. I want to recognize the invaluable role that women play in feeding the world.

In the last few years, several important steps have been taken to assure that women working in agriculture around the world are given the recognition they deserve. In 1994, the First International Conference on Women in Agriculture was held in Melbourne, Australia. It was designed as a forum for women involved in agriculture to