

in commending Imogene "Moby" Matthews for her lifetime of dedication, service and compassion to the residents of northwest Indiana. She has touched the lives of many residents and she will be sorely missed not only by those she has helped with her outstanding service and uncompromising dedication but by myself and my staff who have seen her extraordinary expertise and felt her deep compassion and love. She will never be replaced.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, today is a very important day to American citizens and not just because it is Valentine's Day but because the President has also declared it National Guard and Reserve Day. I am encouraged that our national leadership is finally paying tribute to the citizen soldiers that play such a vital role in the protection of democracy and of our Nation's defense.

The National Guard has been there in every war and conflict that this Nation has ever fought. They were there in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, both World War I and World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Operation Desert Storm and, most recently, Operation Allied Force in Kosovo. The National Guard is an integral part of America's military today, serving side by side with its active duty counterparts all over the world. They meet the security needs of our Nation, both at home and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, the National Guard is the only component in our military that has a dual mission. Their Federal mission is to serve as an essential partner with the country's Army and Air Force, responding to security needs worldwide. Just as important is their State mission of meeting the needs of our citizens during emergencies and disasters. The Guard, with its long history of assisting and protecting local communities, is well prepared to play this critical role in this critical mission area.

I would like to take this opportunity today, Mr. Speaker, to highlight the accomplishments of the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard. 4,452 people strong, the individuals of the South Dakota National Guard are some of the finest citizens in my State. They have served their Federal mission dutifully through deployments. As personnel from the 109th Medical Battalion deployed to Jamaica to perform medical readiness training, the 153rd Engineering Battalion worked on vertical construction in Hohenfels, Germany, and the 109th Engineer Group participated in warfighter exercises in Gafenwoehr. In just 3 years, the 147th Field Artillery's two battalions completed conversion to the multiple launch rocket system, and I have

just gotten word that the 1085th Medical Company has been given the order to prepare the unit for full deployment to Bosnia. In addition, the 114th Fighter Wing of the Air National Guard has deployed more than 500 people in support of the Aerospace Expeditionary Force and is getting ready for their fourth deployment enforcing the no-fly zone in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, these extraordinary individuals have also responded to their State mission, being called on just this past summer to fight the Jasper fire in the Black Hills of South Dakota. This fire was the biggest ever in the history of my State. The 285 soldiers and airmen that were called to active duty to help fight this fire were there to meet the challenge just like they have always been. Their quick response is a credit to the hardworking individuals and their dedication to their job as citizen soldiers.

One can see by looking at the call of duty of the South Dakota National Guard that their responsibilities are escalating. However, at the same time we have unfortunately witnessed a decline in fully funded personnel accounts and end strengths. As the National Guard's number one priority, we must continue to devote attention to full-time manning. Adequate personnel and support are absolutely necessary to ensure a ready and accessible Guard.

Following these lines, we must take steps to ensure that our Nation's forces are capable of fighting and winning two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts. Procurement and modernization play a central role in this. They are crucial elements to our ability to respond to multiple engagements and threats to our national security. Unfortunately, the Army and Air Force are currently wearing out weapons systems and support mission equipment. This is a direct result of the rate at which we have deployed on peacekeeping missions. As we begin to work through the defense authorization and appropriations cycle this year and in the future, more attention must be given to procurement of new weapons systems and to combat capability for all forces.

It is critical that Congress and the new administration provide funding levels sufficient to ensure that America's military capabilities are in line with our superpower responsibilities. We also must take steps to reassess our deployment strategies. Currently there is a great mismatch between U.S. force levels and overseas commitments. In the past decade, U.S. forces, which have included members of the South Dakota National Guard, have been deployed 35 times to places like Panama, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo and even East Timor.

In the 40-year span of the Cold War era, our military was only deployed 10 times. Today, the U.S. Armed Forces are 40 percent smaller but 30 percent busier than they were just 10 years ago. A national strategy that clearly indi-

cates where and under what circumstances deploying American servicemen and women is necessary needs to be developed.

In addition to this increased operations tempo, Congress continues to identify new roles for the National Guard. These include defense against domestic terrorism, national missile defense, and defense against cyber-terrorism.

Members of the South Dakota National Guard form an essential part of our national security team. They are active participants in the full spectrum of operations, from the smallest contingencies to major theater conflicts. They are indispensable forces who truly embody our forefathers' vision. Their dedication to service, Mr. Speaker, and the outstanding manner in which they perform their duties exemplify the notion of the American citizen soldier. And so, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you to them today.

REGARDING AMERICA'S MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, Washington sometimes speaks with its own language. We talk in this town of taking risks, laying it on the line, or getting out on the edge, when the only cost of failure is to our pride or perceived prestige.

Out there beyond the Beltway, in many cases beyond America's shores, are people who really do take risks. They lay their lives on the line every day and they do so because we ask them to. They are, of course, America's finest, our men and women in uniform. And while some in this town may spare them a passing thought now and again, they are thinking of us, and Americans like us, every day. That is what devotion to duty means.

It is unfortunate but correct to note that those soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are never more prominent in our thoughts than when something goes wrong. Our hearts went out to the families of the sterling sailors aboard the U.S.S. *Cole*. We mourned the loss of brave Marines lost in recent aviation mishaps. And today our thoughts are with the families of soldiers killed and injured in an Army helicopter accident.

There is a message in these events, if we care to hear it. It is that even in times of greatest peace, the profession of arms is fraught with hazard. The world demands that we train hard, and realistic training brings real dangers. American interests require that our forces be forward, and those distant waters can mask unseen threats. And the requirement for technological leadership means that flaws in new systems can occasionally take a fearsome price.

So let us give thought on this Valentine's Day, this day dedicated to love,