valuable program. Fortunately, the voters are smart enough to reject those election lies. They are election lies. I do not like to use the word ''lie'' on the floor, but I cannot characterize it any other way because there is no factual basis to them. They try to scare seniors. The last candidate for President tried to scare seniors in my State of Florida, tried to win the election by scaring vulnerable seniors. To have a conversation about Social Security should not be about fright or frightening people. It should be about uplifting them in this great hall of debate.

I choose the high road in this debate as does the majority leader and the Speaker and the majority whip and every member of our conference. We have heard from several today who enunciated our plans for continuing and securing America's future. Over the next several weeks we will continue to engage in debate and respond to the charges by the other side of the aisle. We are not going to sit back and take it anymore. I made that comment last week and I make it again. Bring your charges to this floor and we are ready. We will answer your rhetoric with fact; and we will provide the information so that seniors, as they sit in their living rooms, know the truth. The truth is Social Security is a vitally important program, and we are here prepared to do our duties to ensure the continuation of this great program.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, today for indulging and for all those who participated and again my thanks to the majority leader, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), who recognizes, as he concludes his career in the Congress as we adjourn this session, the value of this program, the value of seniors, and our commitment to continue on leading this Nation in a financially prudent and positive manner.

COLORADO FIRES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KELLER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, as we stand here tonight on the floor of the House, fires are raging in my State of Colorado, fires so devastating, fires so great in proportion. Historically, they are great in proportion, and they are so big that they can be seen, as we are told now, from the Space Shuttle. The smoke and ash from the fires in Colorado can be seen by the people on the Space Shuttle.

These are in every sense of the word catastrophic fires. The one burning closest to my home, the Hayman fire, is over 100,000 acres, I understand, and will probably be burning all summer long. Hard for people to understand that, hard for anybody to get a handle on that concept; but it will probably be burning all summer long we are told, and that is just one fire. There are several others going. There are several starting also, and this one started last Friday. Many of these are being started by arsonists. It is incredible, but that is what is happening in and around Colorado. Of course, in other States they are experiencing similar types of situations.

Now, every ounce of our effort at the present time should be and is directed to trying to fight these fires, and that is certainly appropriate. There will be plenty of time for recriminations as to how and what would be the best way to deal with these things, what would be some of the things we can do to make sure that fires of this nature do not start again, at least to the extent we are able to prevent them.

This was started by a careless camper. He had a fire, illegally. We were at a time that there were no fires allowed in the national forest, no campfires whatsoever. But the law was disregarded by some selfish and unenlightened soul. The fire got out of control, and within just really a very short period of time it had already consumed a good part of the forest around it, and is now, of course, as I say, approaching 100,000 acres, if it is not over that already, 100,000 acres.

Putting that in perspective, we are probably reaching the point when it would be about three times the size of the District of Columbia, just for people to understand what a 100,000 acre fire is. Combined, of course, with all of the other fires going on right now in Colorado, I am sure we are approaching that total.

Now, as I say, this fire was started by an illegal campfire that got away, that was left essentially unattended and got away from its confined area. There will always be fires in the forest. That is part of the natural order of things. There is no two ways about that. We cannot and should not prevent all fires.

So the issue here is not the extent to which the fire that we are witnessing right now could have been prevented. Of course, it could have been prevented, if someone had not carelessly ignited a fire at a campground. But, beyond that, it could not have been prevented even if we had done a lot of work in that forest, because right now, of course, we are in the midst of a horrendous drought. It goes all the way, frankly, from the Canadian to the Mexican border.

The middle part of the United States is facing a drought, is facing drought conditions that are unprecedented in recent history. Certainly in the last 100 years we have not seen anything like this. The snow pack is very low. I was amazed on Monday when I had the opportunity to fly into the fire area and observe the fire, to observe the damage, I was amazed as I looked at Pike's Peak, which is not too far from the site of this fire, and saw just a few ribbons of snow still there. Usually, you can see snow on Pike's Peak in July, sometimes August.

I have lived in Colorado all of my life, and I can remember many, many summer days getting up in the morning, going out to get the paper, looking up at the mountains, and seeing a snow-capped mountain range in front of me in June or July. There is nothing. There was nothing last Monday when I went through this area. There was no snow. There has been no rain, and there are no prospects for rain that we can see on the horizon. So that is why we are going to have massive forest fires, drought, hot weather and densely forested areas.

Now, here is where we can do something about it, and this is what is important for us to try and tackle, because we do have some ability to deal with this situation. We cannot, as I say, nor should we even try, to stop natural fires from occurring. We simply should make sure, to the extent possible, that they occur in areas that have been managed, that is to say, thinned; where the undergrowth of the past 100 years of fire suppression efforts, the result of fire suppression efforts, has accumulated to the extent that we have now this tinderbox called the national forest.

It really has been man's ineptness, man's inability to manage the forest properly over the last 100 years, that has helped cause this situation, our fire suppression efforts, which has been the main thing everybody has been focused on for 100 years.

This is as seen from the space shuttle. This is the fire in Colorado. You can see the smoke plume and the fire down here.

The fact is that there are fires all over the United States, of course. There are fires burning down there. There are fires in several other locations. But this is the one that is incredible. Here is the Glenwood Springs fire. This is the one I was referring to as the Hayman fire. This is my home right here. Down by Durango we have another fire, near Trinidad, Glenwood Springs, and over here by the Utah border, just inside the Utah border. These are the fires in Colorado at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that for 100 years we have attempted to follow a policy to suppress all fires has created a devastating situation, a very, very dangerous situation in our forests. Suppression has meant that we have allowed old timber to fall, to fall to the ground, to decay and to dry out, and that becomes part, of course, of the fuel. We have allowed a tremendous amount of small saplings to grow, and that has become part of the fuel, because they stay relatively small. The forest canopy does not allow for them to grow quickly. It becomes part of the undergrowth.

When it gets like this, when it gets as dry as it is now, that is what we could certainly call a tinderbox, and it takes very little to set it off. Of course, lightning will do it. Time and time again, that is the natural way of fires to start in the forests.

However, when a forest has been thinned by our efforts, by the efforts of

the Forest Service or anyone else, when the forest has been thinned, it is simply a logical situation where you will have less opportunity for these catastrophic fires to burn as quickly as they do and as hot as they do.

These fires that are burning now are so hot that they scorch the Earth below them. Three or four inches down there will be nothing. When this fire passes, there will be nothing there but what we cannot really call Earth, because there is no organic material in it. It has been scorched to 3 or 4, sometimes 6 inches deep. Nature lays down a hyperbolic blanket below that through which nothing can permeate, so regardless of how much rain you get, it does not let it go farther down, because nature is trying to actually save the soil below that layer of impermeable matter.

But what happens above that, of course, is the next time it does rain, all of that will wash away. It will wash down the sides of the slopes into the tributaries; and, in this case, it will run into the Denver water supply, the reservoirs that form the water supply for the Denver metropolitan area.

So once this fire is put out, whether it is in 90 days from now or not, whether it is all summer long, whenever it is put out, that is only the beginning of the problem. Erosion then begins to occur, and the next time it does rain or snow all of this will move, all of the material will move, the ground cover will slide down and end up as silt in these reservoirs.

□ 1615

It will cost millions of dollars. We have already spent, I think, approaching $40 million for this fire. It was $20 million the last I looked; it is probably double that now because it has been twice as long since I heard that figure; $40 million for the fire, but that will be dwarfed by the amount of money that we have to spend in order to try to repair, to the extent we can, the ground itself, and also to filter out the Denver water supply.

Now, there are ways in which man can positively affect the forest environment. There are ways that we can now deal with the land that can reduce the severity of the fires. We are never going to, as I say, nor should we try, to stop all fires. That is really what has gotten us into the situation we have now. We know that is wrong. But we also know that to the extent that we do go in and thin out a forest area, we actually accomplish some very positive goals. Fire will not burn as quickly, it will not burn as hot, it will not burn through the forest if, in fact, it comes to an area that has been treated.

Now, this is very difficult to see and probably impossible, but I will try, nonetheless, to explain what we have here, a couple of pictures of where there was treated area and where there was not. The fire burned right up to it, burned every single thing in its path in the area that was untreated. This is called the Bucktail fire in Colorado. It came up to and stopped, essentially stopped at the treated areas. The fire comes down out of the trees, goes on to the ground and eventually burns itself out in these treated areas.

It is amazing to see. I have seen it with my own eyes. I saw it 2 weeks ago when we were in Colorado and went back to the district and were looking at the effects of other fires, earlier fires, High Meadows and the Snaking fire, they were called. And we could stand on a line and look straight down that line and on the right-hand side where the area had been treated, the fire had stopped. All the way on the left-hand side for as far as one could see, everything was destroyed; just these black spindles sticking up out of a lunar landscape. Everything was destroyed and, as I say, even the ground was seared. We got to that line, and it dropped down out of the trees just like it is supposed to and burned some cover on the ground and burned itself out.

Now, this fire, I do not know how much less severe it would have been had we been able to get in there and do some of the things that the Forest Service had planned on. There was only one area, a roadless area, that was in the middle of this Hayman fire area which had been identified by the Forest Service as the place in which they were going to do thinning. About a year and a half ago when they were ready to start the job of thinning that area, a group of environmental organizations filed an appeal to stop them, stop the Forest Service. This is modus operandi; it happens all the time. The Forest Service goes into negotiation with the environmental groups to try and solve the problems that are presented to them, try to meet the needs of the environmental community in their plan to remove these trees, in the Forest Service plan to remove these trees and underbrush. It goes on negotiating for about a year and a half. We come to the end of that period of time when we think there is an agreement with the environmental community on exactly how the efforts to thin that area of the forest should go on, and the next thing we know, they file another appeal, stopping the whole thing.

We were unable to get in there, therefore. The Forest Service was unable to do any thinning in this particular part of the forest, and I am referring to this roadless area.

Well, there is nothing to really worry about now. There is no reason for the environmental groups to file any other appeals, because the forest that they were concerned about is gone. It is all ash. And as I say, it looks like a lunar landscape. It is devastating beyond anybody's ability to describe it accurately, I guess; but one has to see it to believe it. Twenty-one homes so far, probably more than that, but that is what we know so far that are gone; at least 5,000 people evacuated, 40,000 people getting ready to evacuate.

The impact, as I say, on the environment as a result of the fire will be enormous. It will be much greater than we can possibly imagine, because this is a bigger fire than we can possibly imagine. So all of the things that happen as a result of a catastrophic fire like this are just waiting for us to try and deal with as time goes by. There are hundreds and hundreds of firefighters on the line, but there is little that they can do. The breadth of the fire is so wide, the intensity so great that there is really little they can do. They are dropping, of course, retardant, they are dropping water; but a lot of the water I am told that is dropping out of the buckets that are being carried in there is actually evaporating before it hits the fire, it is so hot, the air is so dry. This is a horrendous fire.

I want to emphasize that I do not blame environmental groups for starting this fire. Of course not. They had nothing to do with the cause of the fire. It is just that we could have had perhaps a much less severe fire had we been able to get in there and thin this land.

Now, I am proposing a piece of legislation that we started on 2 or 3 weeks ago; it was before this most recent fire started. It was after we went up and looked at the results of the Buffalo Creek and High Meadows and Snaking fires in Colorado. There were two things that I was confronted with when I got up there and when we were talking about it. One was that the fine for people starting illegal fires in the forest, illegal camp fires in a Federal area, anyway, is ridiculously small. It was like $25 in that part of the forest where I visited, the Pike National Forest that I visited a couple of weeks ago; and I think it is about $50 in the part of the forest that is presently on fire. A $50 fine or a $25 fine for starting something that could lead to this kind of enormous devastation. That has to be dealt with. That cannot be allowed to continue.

We actually had instances. I was told by the fire people, by the fire rangers up there 2 weeks ago that we had people who would chip in. When a fire ranger got there and told them they had started a fire illegally and the fine was $25, the people just reached into their pockets and everybody chipped in 5 bucks and they handed him the money. So what? For 25 bucks. The other day when I was up there, when I was up there on Monday at the new fire, a forest ranger told me that she had talked to somebody on the phone, I do not remember if it was a day or so before, who wanted to know if they could pay the fine in advance, like a fee, for instance. In this case it was 50 bucks, and they wanted to just send them the ''fee'' or the fine to pay in advance to go up and start a fire in the national forest when it is in the middle of the most horrible drought we have had in 100 years. No one is ever going to lose money in trying to underestimate the stupidity of people like this. It is amazing.

So I have proposed legislation to increase that to a $1,000 fine and the possibility of a year in jail if you end up doing something like this fire, or causing something like this fire. That is for starters.

Then we tried to deal with the issue of, again, what were the reasons, what were the problems that prevented the Forest Service from being able to get in there and clear the land. They really revolved around two things: internal inertia within the Forest Service, internal bureaucratic problems, process problems; it is called analysis paralysis. That is the phrase they use to describe it. Because they spend days, months, years in the analysis of minutia because there might possibly be a challenge, there might possibly be a court challenge, there might possibly be an appeal, so everybody spends 40 or 50 percent of the time they have, instead of actually managing the forest, writing reports that are designed as sort of CYAs, if you will, in case somebody has an objection to what you want to do, and nothing ever happens. That is internally.

Externally, we have groups, organizations that are dedicated to stopping any sort of activity in the forest carried on by mankind. There are the extremists on the one side that say there is absolutely no forest that really man should be in. Forests are nature's preserves and man does not have a place there. And they want to stop any activity whatsoever: no road building, no logging, no recreation. Just stay out. Forests are not for people. That is their motto. Forests are for animals and other forest denizens. And their continued legal battle with the Forest Service always spills into courtrooms or through the bureaucratic process of appeals.

So what we have is between the Forest Service's inability to act just, as I say, internally, and the lawsuits filed by groups like the Wilderness Society that filed the appeals on the thinning proposals for the Pike National Forest. The two things combined are deadly. They lead to this. This is the result. Again, not fires that they start, simply fires that grow faster and are more serious and more severe than they otherwise would have been.

What we are hoping to do is actually return parts of the forest, as much as we can, to a more natural state by thinning. It is imperative that we do this and do it as quickly as possible, or this is going to be the way in which our forests will be consumed in the next year or so. We have already burned more acres in Colorado this summer, and it is not even mid June, than we did all of last year, and I am sure that we are at historical levels. I do not think we have ever had as much land on fire in Colorado. I believe that that is what is going to happen all over the West as this drought continues, and as we keep putting obstacles in the path of the Forest Service to try and deal with this.

There is another bill, therefore, that we introduced that tries to accommodate the needs of everyone involved here. It is called the charter forest idea, the charter forest plan. It was originally proposed by the President. The concept was proposed by the President. We have taken it, I guess this is the first such attempt in the Nation to actually write a Forest Service plan placed on a charter forest. The idea is this: that the local community and the Forest Service will get together on a management plan. Everybody will be at the table during the discussion: environmental groups, business groups, local authorities, county, State, and municipal officials, and, of course, the Forest Service. Everyone will have the opportunity to develop a forest plan, and it will be managed at the local level, for the most part; and it will be freed of many of the bureaucratic obstacles that presently stop other forest management plans from being implemented. And we will be able to then accomplish some of our goals in terms of positive, healthy forest management.

I stress that everybody will have a role to play; everyone will have the ability to discuss the concerns they have about the forest plan; but once it is adopted, then that is the way in which that forest will be operated for at least 10 years. Then we will review it, we will review it actually midpoint at 5 years and again in 10 years to see how well that plan has worked and whether or not the whole concept of charter forest is viable.

It is built really on the charter school concept. That is where it gets its name. Because we have seen for years and years and years that public schools are unable to actually accomplish their tasks many times because of the bureaucratic problems they confront, that people taking the responsibility into their own hands for their children's education will start charter schools. They write a charter and they say, here is the kind of curriculum we want, here is the kind of teachers we want, here is the length of school day we are going to have, here is the number of school days, here is where the setting is going to be; and they write their own school charter and run it themselves at the local level, and we free up and take away many of the regulations and give them a much broader hand in actually running this school.

Well, that is exactly what we are talking about with a charter forest. We are going to reduce the regulatory burden, and we are going to add responsibility to the people at the local level to manage the forest.

So I hope that these concepts will move forward. And I hope that we will be able to quickly get into the forests all around this Nation. If we started tomorrow, of course, it would take us many years to really reduce the fuel loads throughout the forest. But we have to start somewhere. We cannot let fires like this do it for us because, of course, it will be 100 years before this forest will return to anything that looks like a forest. We will all be long gone, and our children will have very little opportunity to enjoy the wonders of this magnificent natural wonderland. So I hope that we can do that quickly.

Now, there is one other area, and this leads me to the next part of my discussion, which will surprise no one; it has to do a little bit with immigration reform. There is another forest that has suffered severe fire damage in the last several months. It is the Coronado Forest in Arizona. I had gone down there a little bit before I went to visit the forest in Colorado; actually, I am sorry, it was about a month before, and we went down there because I am a member of the Committee on Resources and we had heard about the incredible environmental damage that was being done in that area and to the Coronado Forest.

□ 1630

Now, this damage was many-faceted. It was actually the result of literally hundreds of thousands of people coming through this illegally, coming from Mexico into the United States and using the rough terrain and the heavy brush to stay undetected while they came through, either individually seeking whatever they were seeking in America, most of them I am sure looking for jobs, and/or bringing in narcotics, illegal drugs.

The area has now become the most heavily trafficked area along the border for people coming in illegally and bringing in illegal drugs. What we saw were the folks on the border doing yeoman's work, the Border Patrol, in trying to interdict this flow of both people and drugs.

I think something like 90,000 pounds of marijuana and I have forgotten how much of cocaine and heroin have been confiscated already this year, but it still is coming; and it comes as a result of people carrying about 60 pounds of the narcotics on their backs in these homemade backpacks. They come through the forest.

They come by so many numbers, in such large numbers, that of course they begin to wear footpaths throughout the forest. This is a very delicate ecosystem. It does not take much, it does not take many feet on the ground to actually wear a path into the ground in a very short time; and it does not go away for a long, long, long, long time. It is almost like the tundra in that respect.

And just then, you will see that after they follow that path for a while, they will move off because they think that there are sensors that have been placed, and sometimes there are sensors that have been placed by our Border Patrol people to try to catch them, so they move over a little and create another path. When we fly over that forest, we look down and what we see is a spider web of paths, paths through the forest. They are also bringing both mules and horses through loaded with narcotics.

Then they will get to a certain place in the forest sometimes 5, 10, 15 miles up, and they will unload their goods. Another truck will come in on a road that is not a forest road, it will just be a road that was created by so many trucks coming in, pick-up trucks, Suburbans, large vans, SUVs, and they will come in and load the drugs on these trucks and take them out of there.

Of course, all that activity causes damage. There are roads all over the Coronado which are not Forest Service roads. They are simply drug dealer roads, but there are more of them than there are Forest Service roads. There is more activity in that forest with drug dealers than there is of any other thing; more than the campers, more than the hikers, more than the bikers. There are far more people coming through that place with guns protecting drug loads than there are people coming through to enjoy the scenery of a national forest; one of the oldest national forests in the United States, I should add. It was created, I think, in 1903.

That is not all that they have done to the forest. This packing material where they carry these backpacks made of this nylon fiber, where they unload, they just stack up these homemade backpacks that are nothing but, just like I say, these kinds of nylon rope things, but they will be coming in with huge stacks of them. The birds come and take it, build their nests out of it, and sometimes of course they get entangled in it. There are all kinds of environmental problems. The trash is incredible.

As we ride through the forest, as I was able to do on horseback the first day, then we flew over by helicopter the next day, but the first day everywhere we looked along these paths were empty bottles from water, plastic water bottles everywhere, clothes everywhere, tin cans where they made campfires and just cooked something over a fire in tin cans, and they were strewn all over the place. This was not a national forest; it was a national dump.

Now, the other thing that was happening, of course, was that these fires that they were setting at night, these campfires illegally set by people coming in illegally, were catching fire the next day. These people would walk away from it and not pay much attention to it; and of course it would catch fire. This area is also a place of incredible drought. It is a desert anyway, but right now it is even more dangerous in terms of fire.

The day we left there a month ago Sunday, a fire broke out that by the time we got back here had already consumed 35,000 acres. There was another one just a couple of weeks ago that started the same way with people coming through there illegally, people coming into the United States illegally, carelessly starting these fires, walking on and destroying part of the forest.

Now here is an intriguing aspect of it. We were told by the forest manager there that for many of the fires that they fight they cannot even use the typical firefighter methods. They cannot fly in slurry and drop it because there are so many people in the forest, so many illegals coming through the forest, that it actually would harm them. It would get on them. This retardant material might get on them, and we would get sued because we were trying to put out a fire; we dropped the fire retardant, but we have illegals coming through.

I am sure Members are aware of the fact that not too long ago a family of 11 people who died coming into the United States, coming in illegally, they died of thirst and dehydration, or in some way of the elements coming across the desert; and we are being sued by $3.75 million for each one of them, as if it was our fault; we have a burden, and this is our responsibility.

Well, we cannot even fight the fires because there are so many people. We do not even put people up there at night to fight the fires because there are so many people coming through with guns protecting drug traffickers.

And about a little over 3 weeks ago, we had an incident that was very peculiar, and unfortunately, not all that unusual. I thought it was, when I first heard about it; but come to find out it is not all that odd. Here is what happened.

It is a Friday, as I say, maybe 3 weeks ago. Just south of Ajo, Arizona, on the Tohono O'odham Indian reservation, the Indian police came across a Mexican humvee with Mexican military markings on it, and Mexican military inside of it. This was inside the United States of America. This was on the Indian reservation, the Tohono O'odham Indian reservation.

There was a confrontation, and finally the humvee turned around and went away and went back to Mexico. The Indian police called the Border Patrol and the INS, and we sent the cavalry and got down there, and the Mexican military vehicle had turned around. What in the world were they doing there? What is going on?

A little bit later in the day it turns out we interdict a drug shipment. We seize it, it is 1,200 pounds of narcotics, probably marijuana, I am not sure, that were coming through in that same area. Hmmm. Coincidence? It could be. We have a Mexican military vehicle in the United States; we have this shipment of drugs coming through a little bit later that we interdict.

Later on that night, the United States Border Patrol was going along the border, and it comes across that same or another humvee of a similar type, we do not know which because they all look alike, but there is Mexican military inside and Mexican military markings on it.

They are ordered to turn around and go back. The Border Patrol agent is under orders to turn around and go back when he confronts this kind of situation. For one thing, they are outgunned.

One of the peculiar things we have done in order to satisfy some of the concerns expressed by the Mexican Government is that we have taken many of the M–16s away from our Border Patrol people, taken them away and changed them into single-shot as opposed to automatic weapons, so we are outgunned at the border, quite frankly, and certainly outmanned.

He turned around to leave, and a shot rings out and goes through the back window of his vehicle, this is the Border Patrol vehicle, goes through the back window, hits a wire cage that separates the front seat from the back and ricochets off and goes out the right rear window, certainly coming close to killing this agent, this Border Patrol agent and officer.

Now, no one had heard about this. This had happened on a Friday. It was not until Tuesday that I got an e-mail message from a Border Patrol officer in the area telling us about this. I, of course, think that this is incredible. I think it is almost enormously challenging to the United States how this could happen, and how we do not say a thing about it in the United States.

No news program covered this; no newspaper in Arizona covered this. I mean, do Members not think it is newsworthy, Mr. Speaker? I certainly do. I cannot imagine this happening. Let us turn everything around. Let us say armed military of the United States went into some other country and started shooting at their federal police. What do we think would happen? Do we think we would be hearing about that from the state department of the country where this incursion occurred? I think so.

It turns out we have had 118 incursions of a similar nature. Luckily, most of them did not involve firearms, or they did not involve the discharge of firearms. About 90 percent of these incidents were with people carrying guns, but only a small percentage of these things actually ended up in firearms being discharged.

However, 118 times since 1997 we have had incursions into the United States by Mexican military troops or members of the Mexican Federal police, 118 times. These are confirmed, by the way. I am told by the Border Patrol that there are far more times than that that this has happened, but the status of ''confirmed'' is difficult to get, so 118 is what we have confirmed.

I kept saying, what are you talking about, 118 times people have come into the United States from a foreign country? Why, I said? Were they lost? And, of course, there were chuckles around the table. Everybody thought that was pretty humorous that I would ask the question.

But I said, I do not understand it. Were they lost? What were they doing in the United States? The answer given to me every single time by the people

down there was, it is drug related. It is the opinion of almost every single one, no, not almost, but of every single person that we asked on the border as to what was the nature of these incursions, why would we have Mexican military, Mexican federal police in the United States, and they said it is because they were either protecting or creating a diversion for, the same thing, protecting a large drug shipment that was going through.

They are not there all the time because most of the drug shipments are relatively small. It is a few people carrying these 60-pound backpacks, and there maybe 20 of them. They are usually preceded by a guy with an M–16 and followed up by a guy with an M–16 as they go through.

Imagine Mom and Dad camper at the forest there at the campsite, and all of a sudden going across the parking lot were 20 people, going across with narcotics in their backpacks, and followed by somebody with an M–16. It would be an interesting sight to behold, but I think a little more than they were bargaining for when they bought their parks pass.

□ 1645

But that is what is happening in the forest and it is actually being abetted by the Mexican government. This is incredible and yet we do nothing about it. The forest is ablaze down there just like ours, not to the same extent, but it is ablaze. But why will we not say anything about that forest?

It is also, by the way, closed. They have closed the Coronado to anybody coming through. No more tourists coming through. But of course, they cannot close Coronado to the illegal traffic coming through. They can only close the Coronado to the people who want to just recreate there. But it is too dangerous. The fire danger is too great. The danger also of confronting somebody that is armed is too great.

The forest manager of that area told me that his greatest nightmare is that one of these days there is going to be a shootout, there is going to be some sort of event that occurs that confronts tourists and/or some of his own people with people taking narcotics through there and somebody is going to get killed. It almost happened, like I say, about 3 weeks ago on a Friday when the Federal border patrol agent was almost killed. But we hear nothing about it.

The reason we hear nothing about it is because it is a very sensitive topic. When I called the State Department and asked them about it, they said, Congressman, we are taking this up at the highest levels of government. I said, How long have you been taking this up? This has been happening since 1997. When do you think we are going to get an answer?

I wrote a letter to the Mexican President Vicente Fox and said, I would like to know what you know about these events. I would like to know what you are doing to stop these events. He did not write me back. I got a letter back from the ambassador from Mexico that said we do not like the tone of your letter and these incidents are being dealt with.

I am amazed that I have to sort of talk about this on the floor of the House to let people know what has happened. It should be a matter that is on every single news program in the United States. It should be something we talk about in the newspaper, something we talk about in our committees, in the Committee on Armed Services, in the Committee on International Relations. We should be discussing these things. We are not because we know that this is a very dangerous situation, very touchy situation, very sensitive.

Why is it sensitive? It is sensitive because if the American public knew about these things, the extent to which they exist, combined with what the American public already knows about the porous nature of our borders and the ability for people to come across them at will and maybe to do us great harm, that the American public would rise up and demand from their representatives that they do something to secure this border, our borders. And I do not mean just the border between the United States and Mexico. I am talking about the border all the way around this country, north, south, east and west.

We have to do far more than we have done to secure those borders. We have sent troops thousands of miles away to defend the borders of other countries, but we refuse to put troops on our own border to defend our own country. Does this make sense to anyone? The defense of this Nation, as I said a hundred times, begins at the defense of border. And if you do not think that we have a problem just because people are coming here illegally and they are just benign, they are just looking for jobs and why try to stop them, well, you are right. Most people coming into the country illegally are just looking for jobs and why try to stop them? But a lot of people are coming in with dangerous stuff on their backs, in this case, dangerous narcotics on their back.

What is to say the next person who wants to do something to the United States like a terrorist attack will not bring in something a heck of a lot worse on their back? And what is to stop them?

I guarantee you if you look at the border you will find there is nothing to stop them. It is 5,500 miles, some delineated or demarcated by barbed wire fence and periodic ports of entry. As if anybody coming into the United States illegally is going to go through the ports of entry and say can I come in. I just do not have a pass right now. Of course not.

Why do you not walk a mile down the road and walk across the line into the United States? You can do it. There is no problem. Why? Because we cannot possibly defend our borders, can we? We cannot possibly defend 5,500 miles of border. You know what? We can. We choose not to. Can we make so it is impossible for anybody coming into the United States and do us harm? No. I know we cannot seal the border. It is impossible. It is impossible. We would not want to. There are trade issues and all the rest of that stuff. But can we do more than we are today to protect our borders? Yes, we can.

The President made a good first step when he announced last week when he is asking for the Congress to take action and create the Homeland Defense Agency that includes all of the disparate parts of border security. I am all for it. I commend him for doing that. I will do everything I can to support that effort. I hope that the Congress of the United States will act quickly to implement it. That will not be easy.

We all know here that one of the major obstacles to surrendering a little part of your turf is there are egos involved, and God forbid that anybody think that there are people around here with big egos. But let us face it, turf battles here are the deadliest and nastiest thing you will ever see.

This will be a massive turf battle because we will take agencies away from a committee of reference and put them over here, and every chairman will be very upset about the fact that they are losing their little bit of power. It will not happen easily, but it is our responsibility to do it. We are not at the end of the road there. There are other things that can be done.

Certainly the military can be implemented in a much better way than we have used them so far in the protection of borders. We will have more to say about this issue next week. But for the time being, it behooves us, it seems to me, to do everything we can to protect and defend these borders. And although there are plenty of people who do not like it, plenty of people here in this body, even in the administration, plenty of people in Mexico, maybe in Canada, who want to see open borders, the elimination of borders, it is such a nice idealistic concept, no borders, it is kumbaya time, everybody grabs hands and sings, and why can't we all just get along, as the old saying was.

Well, you know what, there are reasons for borders. There are reasons. And the idealism of libertarian concept of open borders just does not fit with the real world. September 11 of last year should teach us the importance of borders and well-defended borders. It should teach us the importance of trying to identify who comes into the United States and why and for how long and what are they doing here once they get here, and do they leave when they are supposed to?

Other countries are able to handle that. You would think a country the size of the United States with the resources of the United States would figure out a way to actually identify the

people coming in, determine how long they are going to be able to stay here, and determine when they leave. And if they do not leave, find them, deport them.

You would think we would be able to do that. It is a big country. It would be hard, but it is not impossible. We can do it, Mr. Speaker, and we must do it. That is the thing. We have no options, really, because frankly our responsibility as a Congress and as a Federal Government is primarily to defend the lives and properties of the people in this country. That is number one. All of the other stuff we do around here is not as important. The hundreds of millions of dollars, the hundreds of billions of dollars we have appropriated to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education and the Department of Transportation, all of that money, really and truly, although some of it may be well spent, the fact is it has nothing to do with the primary goal of this country and the Federal government, I should say, the responsibility of the Federal Government. Nothing to do with that. But it has everything to do with our responsibility to establish border security.

I have talked on this issue many times and at great length, and I can only hope that we have moved the process along a little bit and that we are going to take steps soon to actually do something to secure those borders. And as I say, I am very happy with the President's proposal for consolidation of activities inside the Homeland Defense Agency.

These are difficult times and we are challenged as perhaps we have never been challenged before. Because even in wars of the past we have been able to know exactly where the enemy was, confront them wherever they are, have the battle. We know who wins. We know who loses, and at the end of a period of time, thank God, the enemy surrendered and we know victory has been achieved and we can come home and begin our lives anew. But this is a different kind of war. We will never know perhaps when the battle is over with. We are challenged in a way we have never been challenged before as Americans.

It now behooves all of us in this body to take the important steps that have to be taken to secure those borders. Even then, as I have said a hundred times, it will not assure us that someone does not get through; but you can do at least this. You can say to yourself, I did everything I could as a Member of this Congress, as the President of the United States, I have done everything I could possibly do to secure our borders and to make sure something like this never happens again. It could; but on the other hand, we need to do everything that we can do.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. FORBES (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today on account of his daughter's high school graduation.

Mr. MCINNIS (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today on account of traveling to inspect ongoing fire damage in the district.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BONIOR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FILNER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LANTOS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HOYER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at the request of Mr. WILSON of South Carolina) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, June 17.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 2431. To amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to ensure that chaplains killed in the lone of duty receive public safety officer death benefits.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 4 o'clock and 57 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, June 17, 2002, at 12:30 p.m., for morning hour debates.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

7366. A letter from the Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Raisins Produced From Grapes Grown in California; Reduction in Production Cap for 2002 Diversion Program [Docket No. FV02–989–2 FIR] received May 16, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7367. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Citrus Canker; Quarantined Areas [Docket No. 02–029–1] received May 16, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7368. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Importation of Used Farm Equipment From Regions Affected with Foot-and-Mouth Disease [Docket No. 01–037–1] received May 16, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7369. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Imported Fire Ant; Addition to Quarantined Areas [Docket No. 01–081–2] received May 16, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7370. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Oriental Fruit Fly; Removal of Quarantined Areas [Docket No. 01–080–2] received May 16, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7371. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Change in Disease Status of Slovakia and Slovenia Because of BSE [Docket No. 01–122–2] received May 16, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7372. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's FY 2001 Chief Information Officer Annual Information Assurance Report, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 131 Public Law 106—65, section 1043; to the Committee on Armed Services.

7373. A letter from the Under Secretary, Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Department of Defense, transmitting a Report on Activities and Programs for Countering Proliferation and NBC Terrorism; to the Committee on Armed Services.

7374. A letter from the Director, Corporate Policy and Research Department, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule—Benefits Payable in Terminated Single-Employer Plans; Allocation of Assets in Single-Employer Plans; Interest Assumptions for Valuing and Paying Benefits—received May 16, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

7375. A letter from the Director, Office of Integrated Analysis and Forecasting, EIA, Department of Energy, transmitting notification that the Energy Information Administration's (EIA's), ''Performance Profiles of Major Energy Producers 2000'' is being released electronically on the World Wide Web; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

7376. A letter from the Director, Regulations Policy and Management Staff, Department of Health and Human Resources, transmitting the Department's final rule—Over-the-Counter Human Drugs; Labeling Requirements; Partial Delay of Compliance Dates [Docket Nos. 98N–0337, 96N–0420, 95N–0259, and 90P–0201] (RIN: 0910–AA79) received May 14, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

7377. A letter from the Regulations Coordinator, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's ''Major'' final rule—Medicaid Program; Medicaid Managed Care: New Provisions [CMS–2104–F] (RIN: 0938–AK96) received June 13, 2002, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

7378. A letter from the Secretary of the Commission, Federal Trade Commission,