

Senate after a good business career. He has been here only for one term but in those 6 years he established a solid reputation as an independent Member, committed to doing what he thinks is right, even if it puts him at odds with other members of his party.

He and I serve on the Governmental Affairs Committee, and I have been impressed by his willingness to hold hearings on scandals and malfeasance in the mutual fund and insurance industries. Perhaps because of his business background, he understands the importance of effective oversight by the Federal Government.

I regret he is leaving. He has been a gentleman, and it is too bad that we do not have more like PETER FITZGERALD. He is a wonderful person to work with. He has got a ready smile, and he is a gentleman at all times.

I close my remarks by noting that these men have made remarkable contributions to our society, and all Americans should be grateful. I would tell those who are retiring, I retired 4 years ago, and I did not like it. So here I am. Perhaps there is hope for any of them who want to rejoin. If you want to come back, I am here to tell you it can be done. Just make sure that you get to keep your seniority.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and thank my colleagues for their indulgence while I made my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me say—this is probably the first and only time I have ever said this—I have been listening carefully to my friend from New Jersey, and I agree with everything he said.

I have had a chance to talk a little bit about some of these people who are retiring, and at some length about Senator NICKLES, and I certainly appreciate the Senator's remarks about him.

TRIBUTE TO AIR FORCE SECRETARY JAMES G. ROCHE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, we have been paying a lot of tributes to retiring Members of the Senate, and I think it is appropriate to pay tribute to at least one of our retiring public servants, and I would like to do that right now for the Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. James G. Roche.

I know Secretary Roche has been attacked from time to time. That goes with the job. It is a tough job. He knew that when he came. I think we can put that aside and pay tribute to the things he has done that are not as controversial but have been good for the Air Force and for our country.

You have to keep in mind that Secretary Roche left a lucrative career in private life to take this job as Secretary of the Air Force. He brought a lot of savvy with him from his private business career. I remember so well when he was first confirmed, his first trip was to go with me to Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma. After visiting

that base, he returned to Washington with Secretary Gibbs and immediately put in place a plan to revitalize the depots using the existing Air Force budget. This is something that previous administrations have never accomplished. They seemed to be more interested in letting the depots rust away.

Secretary Roche invested money, time, and industrial know-how into the depots, and he did it in a partnership arrangement where he actually stimulated the communities to pass very large bond issues to exercise the private participation. He started a program where depots were benchmarked off similar commercial enterprises and started informal competition that drove maintenance days down ever lower. He brought LEAN manufacturing processes to the depots and other similar commercial practices that revitalized the workforce, decreased the failure rates, raised readiness standards, and decreased overall costs at the depots.

I look at the record he had. In fiscal year 2003 alone, AMC reported that the mission-incapable aircraft part hours decreased by 37.6 percent, the percentage of hours grounded. It bettered the goal by 922,000 hours. The mission-incapable aircraft part incidents decreased by 23.4 percent, which bettered the goal by 4,400 incidents. Logistics response time was reduced 20.4 percent. Stockage effectiveness increased by 5.5 percent. It goes on and on.

His record is there. He has done a magnificent job at applying his business practices in making our scarce dollars in the military go a lot further.

I was very impressed with his focus on depots, but his ability to guide the Air Force through the troubled waters after 9/11 were equally impressive. He restructured the force and focused training to support new missions: homeland defense, renewed focus on Close Air Support, close partnering with the Army in joint operations and Space support to warfighters.

He expanded the role and support for special operations. He accelerated the delivery to the battlefield of Armed Predators and Global Hawks, bombers in support of close air support, tactics enabling engagement or the Time Sensitive Targets, networked Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, and advanced Combined Air Operations Center capabilities.

Secretary Roche and General Jumper have done a remarkable job. I remember, back in the late 1990s, after we downsized and downgraded and had done away with a lot of the modernization programs in our military under the previous administration, General Jumper had the courage to stand before our committee and say and admit we were going to have to do something about modernization, something about the F-22, something about the Joint Strike Fighter, because the Russians were making the SU series that was actually better than our best strike vehicles, which were the F-15s and F-16s.

And this was done. This is the type of courage that came forth during Secretary Roche's administration.

The investigation into the tanker lease continues, and it will continue until all individuals who acted inappropriately are held accountable. That is appropriate. However, we must move forward on recapitalizing our tanker fleet, fighting the war on terrorism, and getting back to the business of supporting the warfighters, specifically, moving forward on confirmations of senior military leaders so our troops in the field have the leadership they deserve.

I think it is time to allow the investigations to find out who is guilty of wrongdoing. Yes, it was wrong to take the tanker deal to the Appropriations Committee and skip the authorizers. But that was fixed. We held hearings. We compromised, and it looks like we have killed the tanker deal. We have investigations underway, some complete, and those who committed crimes are going to pay for their crimes. So let's not overreach this subject and bring innocent men and women under public attack.

Let me say that Secretary Roche has been innovative. He has tirelessly pressed new ideas. I thank Secretary Roche for the very fine contributions he made to the U.S. Air Force and to the United States of America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

TRIBUTES TO RETIRING SENATORS

PETER FITZGERALD

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I want to share a few remarks about our friend and colleague PETER FITZGERALD. It has been a real honor for me to serve with him. We have had quite different backgrounds.

PETER grew up in suburban Chicago and attended very fine parochial schools. He attended Dartmouth College where he graduated cum laude with highest distinction majoring in Latin and Greek. He got his law degree from the University of Michigan and came from a very prominent family there.

He is a wonderful person, a person I got to know, although our backgrounds are different, I having grown up in south Alabama, the son of a country store owner, going barefoot and swimming in the creeks. We enjoyed talking with one another. He liked Bear Bryant, and we talked about a number of things.

One thing he shared with me on a number of occasions is his belief that there should be in government, in the business of the United States and the State governments, integrity. He talked with me about his recommendation to President Bush about a U.S. attorney appointment in Chicago. He wrestled with it and talked with me over a period of weeks about the fact