

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that whatever time remains for the Republicans be reserved until the Democrats have finished our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from California is recognized.

(The remarks of Mrs. BOXER, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. WARNER, Mr. COLEMAN, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. ALEXANDER, pertaining to the introduction of S. 2191 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

ARMENIAN RESOLUTION

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I am greatly concerned. I had breakfast early this morning, together with the Senator from Michigan, the chairman of our committee, and two House senior Members of the Armed Services Committee—our annual meeting to work toward conference of the authorization bill—Secretary Gates and the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Admiral. We addressed this issue of the Armenian resolution in the House. I do not in any way imply that the House has moved forward on that in an improper way. I don't want to get into the politics. I simply say I perceive that this is changing, a changing issue in the House. It may well not be brought up. But the Secretary of Defense again, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, reiterated the possible impact of such a resolution, were it to be passed, upon our operating forces, both in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. President, it is my intent to oppose the non-binding resolution, passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee, that states that the deportation of nearly 2 million Armenians from the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923, resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million of them, amounted to genocide. While I deplore the killings of Armenians 92 years ago by the Ottoman Empire, I urge my colleagues to consider the grave consequences this may have on United States-Turkish relations and on interests of the United States in Europe and the Middle East. Turkey has been a steadfast ally and an indispensable friend in a critical region of the world. If Turkey decides to respond negatively to our passage of this resolution, their decision could have lasting repercussions for U.S. foreign policy interests in the region and compromise our conduct of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The House resolution on the Armenian genocide appears at a particularly sensitive point in United States-Turkish relations. The possibility of a Turkish incursion into northern Iraq must be an immediate concern. There is no doubt that tensions are mounting along the Iraqi-Turkish border. The

United States has urged Turkey not to send troops over the border into northern Iraq to fight Kurdish separatist rebels, who launched cross-border attacks against Turkish targets. We must all urge Turkey and Iraq to seek a diplomatic solution to this crisis and the House resolution could undermine our diplomatic leverage.

Last week, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that relations with Turkey are vital because 70 percent of the air cargo sent to U.S. forces in Iraq and 30 percent of the fuel consumed by U.S. forces in Iraq are flown through Turkey. Secretary Gates said that U.S. commanders "believe clearly that access to airfields and roads and so on, in Turkey, would very much be put at risk if this resolution passes and the Turks react as strongly as we believe they will."

I would like to share some important facts with my colleagues about how Turkey is enabling our forces to achieve the mission we have given them. Turkey has provided over 20,000 overflight clearances to U.S. military and contracted aircraft since 2002. These flights carry critical supplies and equipment to our forces in the field, currently including 95 percent of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected, MRAP, vehicles. These flights also include our medical evacuations from Iraq to Landstuhl, Germany. KC-135 tankers operating out of Incirlik, Turkey, have flown over 3,400 sorties and delivered 35 million gallons of fuel to U.S. fighter and transport aircraft on missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Finally, approximately 30 percent of the fuel and 17 percent of the food used by U.S. and coalition forces enter Iraq from Turkey via the Habur Gate border crossing.

I would like to expand on these military concerns. The loss of access to critical air and ground lines of communication through Turkey to Iraq and Afghanistan may result in: (1) temporary interruptions to the flow of cargo; (2) increased aircraft requirements; (3) increased costs; and (4) longer transit times.

If these supplies need to be rerouted by ground through Kuwait, or Jordan, we must be concerned about additional force protection issues. I am very troubled about our ground convoys that already move from Kuwait to Iraq. They are high-value targets to insurgent groups. I visited with a number of the convoy drivers on my last visit to Kuwait. We have brave and experienced drivers leading these dangerous convoys, but I am concerned about the heightened risks associated with an increase in number of convoys or employing less experienced drivers on the road to meet the new mission caused by the loss of access to lines of communications through Turkey.

There is one additional point I would like to make about the impact on our operations in Iraq. I believe we should all be concerned about the potential negative impact this resolution could

have on the eventual redeployment or withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. If Turkey decides to cut off our lines of communications through their country that redeployment or withdrawal would be more difficult.

I would also like to remind my colleagues that there are over 1000 Turkish soldiers in Afghanistan. Turkey remains the only Muslim country in the International Security Assistance Forces, ISAF, in Afghanistan. Their troops have significant responsibilities in ISAF which include providing security in Kabul.

I urge my colleagues to consider the consequences which may result from passing the House legislation on Armenian genocide and encourage them to reject the measure. The passage of this measure would do great harm to our relations with a key ally in NATO, our interests in the region, and our military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is the House of Representatives' business. But I do believe here in the Senate we have to address that issue.

I do not in any way disparage or denigrate the seriousness of what happened 92 years ago, at another time in history. But right now we have young men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States, and our coalition partners, risking their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. The passage of this could have implications on nations in that region which I think could be detrimental and could put at risk the lives of our service persons.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3043, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3043) making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Harkin/Specter amendment No. 3325, in the nature of a substitute.

Vitter amendment No. 3328 (to amendment No. 3325), to provide a limitation on funds with respect to preventing the importation by individuals of prescription drugs from Canada.

Dorgan amendment No. 3335 (to amendment No. 3325), to increase funding for the State Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Thune amendment No. 3333 (to amendment No. 3325), to provide additional funding for the telehealth activities of the Health Resources and Services Administration.