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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DONOVAN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 1, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL M. DONOVAN, Jr. to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2016, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, in a few moments this morning, I will be introducing a House resolution, a bipartisan House resolution, with Congressman DON YOUNG from the State of Alaska calling on the Senate to, once and for all, ratify the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea Treaty.

Mr. Speaker, this is a treaty which was negotiated by the Reagan adminis-

tration back in the late 1980s. It is a treaty which has been endorsed by Democratic Presidents, Republican Presidents, Condoleeza Rice, and military leadership of all stripes, to create a system of rules of the road in terms of maritime disputes.

As I said, the military leadership of this country has been adamant and consistent year in and year out about the need for our country to join 166 other countries in the world in terms of ratifying this treaty. As Marine General Joe Dunford said a short time ago, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: "We undermine our leverage by not signing up to the same rule book by which we are asking other countries to accept."

Today, as this map shows, all the purple countries are those that have ratified the treaty, and the blue countries are those that have not. The United States joins the following company in terms of refusing to ratify this treaty: North Korea, Iran, Syria, Libya, and Venezuela.

Now, again, this is a measure which has been debated over the years, and it has been, I would argue, sort of a Washington, D.C., parlor game in terms of the theoretical impact that it may or may not have; but in recent months, the need to do this has become much sharper and clearer.

This past week at the House Committee on Armed Services, which I serve on, and I am the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces, Admiral Harry Harris testified. He is our commander of PACOM. He has all of Asia-Pacific, the region of the world where China today is blatantly violating maritime law by creating islands out of nothing, creating landing strips and militarizing those new land masses in a clear attempt to, again, violate the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea Treaty by creating an economic zone that is going to interfere with the free passage

of commercial traffic. Ninety-five percent of the world's commodities go by sea. Their intentions are crystal clear.

Admiral Harris, when he testified the other day, made it also very clear that "acceding to the convention"—the Law of the Sea Treaty—"gives us the moral high ground to criticize those countries that would seek to inhibit freedom of maneuver in the oceans and airspace around the world, including the Asia-Pacific region."

Interestingly, the following day, General Philip Breedlove, the commander of NATO, European Command for the U.S., came in and without any prompting testified to exactly the same policy position because what he is seeing in his region of the world is that a resurgent Russia is militarizing the Arctic Circle, that they are using this, again, melting of the ice cap as an opportunity to militarize that region of the world and try and control what is going to be a maritime passage, where both military assets and commercial traffic are going to move back and forth.

General Breedlove, again, made exactly the same point: we need to get into the game. This was made crystal clear just a few months ago. The Government of the Philippines, to its credit, has challenged China. They filed an application before The Hague, citing the Law of the Sea Treaty, that what they are doing in the South China Sea blatantly violates international law.

The United States asked not to participate directly as a party, because we haven't ratified the treaty, but simply to be an observer, to be a friend of the court to be able to contribute ideas and data—which our Navy has more than any other Navy in the world—and we were denied observer status because we have not ratified this treaty.

So right now people are hard at work in The Hague writing the rules of the road in terms of maritime issues that are going to determine budgets. And, again, I am the ranking member of the

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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