

buffer zone in the State of Oklahoma between a population of 100,000 people living in Lawton and the live-fire range.

So let me just wind up and conclude by saying that many of us, including Senator WARNER, the chairman of our Armed Services Committee, are asking the President and pleading with him to work out some type of arrangement to, at the very least during this interim while we are in recess, provide for training on the island of Vieques because if that does not happen, we will lose American lives.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Would the Chair be kind enough to tell me what the order of business is?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business until the hour of 12 o'clock and under the minority's time.

Mr. DURBIN. I understand that my colleague, Senator KENNEDY from Massachusetts, will be joining me on the floor shortly. I will certainly yield at that point.

VIDEO CAMERAS IN THE COCKPITS OF AIRCRAFT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to address several topics that I think may be of interest to those who are following the debate in the Senate. One in particular has become a focal point of the news media across the United States and literally around the world. That was the crash of the EgyptAir aircraft just a few weeks ago and the loss of over 200 lives.

I find it interesting, as we try to piece together all the information to determine what happened in that aircraft disaster, how limited we are with respect to investigative tools. We have the so-called black box which has the flight data information. We are poring through that to try to determine what was happening mechanically on that plane when it went down. Then we have the audio recording which is now the focus of all sorts of international speculation. We listen to that audio recording for sounds, for words, and then try to piece together this mystery to determine what happened in the cockpit of that plane which led to this loss of life.

This is more than just to satisfy curiosity. This investigation is being undertaken, as most are, to determine whether there is something we can or should do to change the way aircraft

are maintained and flown to protect those who are passengers. These investigations are critically important. We often come up with information about a mechanical failure. We then set out to repair it. We decide that planes won't go back up in the air until that is taken care of. If there is human error—that will happen in most accidents—we at least get to the bottom of the equation and understand what is going on.

The thing I find absolutely incredible, in 1999, is that we are dealing with such primitive tools when it comes to investigating aircraft disasters. The idea of an audio recording in a cockpit goes back to the 1930s. That was the state of the art then. But today, technology is far more advanced and I would suggest that we need to update plane safety by putting a video camera in the new planes' cockpits so we can determine what is happening in a crash.

The obvious is not being used. If you walk into a bank, if you walk into most office buildings, a casino, a convenience store, or stand in front of an ATM machine, you will be on a video camera which will reflect your conduct and your activities. Think what a difference it would make today if there had been a video camera in the cockpit of the EgyptAir aircraft.

The obvious question is, Why haven't we done this? The technology is there. It is a question of will. It may be a question of legislation. That is why I have written not only to the head of the Federal Aviation Administration as well as the Department of Transportation and the National Transportation Safety Board, urging them to expedite this question about whether or not we can safely install a video camera in the cockpit of aircraft to make certain that if there is an accident, so that we have another tool available to determine the reason for the disaster. We wouldn't be involved in all this speculation with the people of Egypt about the utterance of a prayer and whether that meant this was a suicide mission or something far different if we had a videotape we could refer to. We could find out who was at the controls and what they did at those controls. We would have an obvious clear answer to the question.

As I went through this, I was amazed. I stopped and thought for a moment, why in the world are we still stuck with a tape recording of voices and sounds in the investigation of this aircraft disaster? I am urging my colleagues, those who feel as I do, to join me in this effort to make certain we bring the very best technology to the cockpits of aircraft, not only in the United States but those who serve the United States, so the day may come that if there is a disaster, we will have a final and complete answer, not just to satisfy curiosity but, even more im-

portant, to make sure passengers across the world can at least have some piece of mind knowing we have done everything we can to make airline safety our top and highest priority.

CLOSING DAYS OF THE SESSION

Mr. DURBIN. In the closing days of this session—it is interesting—we have spent almost a year debating 13 appropriations bills. Now we are trying to bring them to a close. We have some six or seven bills that will finally be lumped together in a huge package which literally no single Member of the Senate will ever read.

It will come to the floor. And then weeks afterwards, when people pore through the details, they will call us in our offices and say: Did you know there was a paragraph in this bill which has an impact on some people or some businesses? In all honesty, we don't. We rely on our leadership and other appropriators. Frankly, we rely on a system that is flawed, a system that allows this to happen too often. It is an unfortunate system and, frankly, reflects the fact that this Congress has been very unproductive.

When Members of the Senate return to their homes and are asked by average families in their States, what did you accomplish to make life better for the families of America, we will be hard pressed to point to any significant thing we have done.

If we pay attention to the polling data of what Americans are worried about and what families are concerned about, we have missed the boat entirely. We have missed it entirely, when it comes to the question of the relationship between American families and their health insurance companies. Time and time again, when asked, these families respond that they are concerned about the fact doctors are no longer making decisions, nurses are no longer making decisions. Decisions are being made by insurance companies and their clerks.

We are down to the wire. Most of the major issues that are on the minds of the American public are being buried in this session of the Congress. Most of the bills, such as the Patients' Bill of Rights, that could have helped working families are being stifled and gutted. The Senate passed a bill several months ago which was an embarrassment. It was, in fact, a protection bill for the insurance companies. It didn't protect patients. It protected the CEOs of companies that are making literally millions of dollars off health care in America.

Over the steadfast opposition of the Republican leadership, the House of Representatives took a different course. They overwhelmingly approved, 275-151, a bipartisan bill with strong protections for all privately insured Americans. What a contrast. The Senate came up with an insurance version