

BAD NATIONAL DEFENSE POLICY

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, bad national defense policy is about to get us into serious trouble—again. As I speak, United States Armed Forces are in direct danger because they are being used as social workers in a very dangerous country—Haiti. Most Americans will be greatly surprised that I am saying the United States Army is still in Haiti. Why are most Americans surprised? Because it has been more than 4 years since the September day in 1994 when the President sent a force of 20,000 troops to this island. Despite what the United States did in Haiti, not much has changed, except that the United States force has become tiny and in a great peril. No elected official has been able to bring peace or democracy to Haiti. Factional fighting has immobilized the government and stymied efforts at economic recovery. The factionalism has provoked assassinations and bombings reminiscent of the bad old days.

Fortunately, Congress has been put on-call by a voice of honesty coming from our uniformed ranks. Last month, General Wilhelm, Commander of the U.S. Southern Command, directly and honestly described the mounting danger surrounding his troops. The 500 United States military personnel left to help prop up Haiti are doing mostly social work and spending much of their time defending themselves from attack. Let me be clear about what kinds of work our troops in Haiti are doing. They are not fighting an enemy. They are involved in tasks like digging wells, providing medical services, and training police and military officers. Such work might be understandable if it contributed to stability. It is not. The 500 United States troops still in Haiti spend much of their energy just trying to protect themselves against those they came to help. Unfortunately, it is now difficult for the administration to accept a clearheaded understanding of these dire circumstances and call for a pullout. Doing so will concede the failure of a peacekeeping mission regularly touted as one of the shining achievements of recent years.

The list of the administration's failed peace missions is long and growing. I am unconvinced that trying to resuscitate these failed nation-states is in the U.S. vital interest. The costs of U.S. involvement in peacekeeping are not in our national interests and should be reduced. The price tag of the Bosnia mission, for example, has already hit \$12 billion, with no end in sight. Haiti has cost more than \$2 billion. However, today the 500 soldiers in Haiti—mostly Army reservists rotating through on short-term assignments—remain in Haiti at a cost of about \$20 million last year.

The question is simple: Is it in the United States' best interest to have

our troops in imminent danger, preoccupied with defending themselves against people whom they have come to help, who have shown little inclination for reform at a cost of \$20 million annually to America? This is the path down which the administration has taken the United States. We are now involved in a steady run of civil wars without clear solutions which involve failed nation-states. We will soon drown in this kind of foolishness. Stemming civil wars should not be the main strategic challenge for the United States. These kinds of misadventures do not really engage the strategic interest of the United States. Certainly, such ill-conceived adventures do arrogantly endanger our troops.

Because of this, I call on the administration to swiftly withdraw the 500 service men and women who are currently in Haiti.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. STEVENS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON
THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR
2000

The Senate continued with the consideration of the concurrent resolution.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, today we begin our annual pilgrimage to establishing a budget for the next fiscal year. The first year of the new millennium is almost upon us, and we are moving at a fairly rapid pace to get this budget into place, as contrasted to some of the experiences we have had in the past. I commend our chairman, Senator DOMENICI, for his lending the urgency that he has to getting this job underway.

Lest it be misunderstood, Mr. President, that does not mean I agree with everything that we have come up with. But we are moving the ball, as they say, and we will have a chance to amend or debate the budget resolution as it passed the Budget Committee.

As we begin our work on a budget for a new century and a new era in our Nation's economic history, we do it with the knowledge and the satisfaction that at long last, America has put its fiscal house in order.

At the same time, we still face serious long-term questions. The key question facing Congress is whether we meet those challenges and prepare for the future, or whether we will yield to short-term temptation at tomorrow's expense.

Democrats are committed to focusing on the future. Our top priority is to save Medicare and save Social Security for the long term by reducing our debt and increasing national savings. We also want to provide targeted tax relief for those who need it most, and that is the average middle-class family in America. We want to invest in education and other priorities.

Our friends, the Republicans, have a different view. Their plan focuses on tax breaks, largely for the wealthy. These tax breaks, whose costs would increase dramatically in the future, would absorb resources that are needed to preserve and to save Medicare.

That, when you get right down to it, is really the main issue before the Senate: Should we provide tax cuts, many of which will benefit the wealthy, or use that money to save Medicare? It is as simple as that.

Of course, there is a lot more to the budget resolution before us, so let me take some time to explain why I, like every other Democratic member of the Budget Committee, strongly opposed this resolution. There are four primary reasons.

First, as I have suggested, it fails to guarantee a single extra dollar for Medicare. Instead, it diverts the funds needed for Medicare to pay for tax cuts that, again, benefit the wealthy fairly generously.

Second, it does nothing to extend the solvency of the Social Security trust fund. In fact, it could block President Clinton's proposed transfer of surplus funds to help extend solvency.

Third, I think it is fiscally dangerous. The resolution proposes tax cuts that begin small but that explode in the future. Some are around \$13 billion in the first year the budget goes into place, up to \$180 billion—\$177 billion—expected in the tenth year, just when the baby boomers are beginning to retire.

And fourth, it proposes extreme and unrealistic cuts in domestic programs. These could devastate public services if enacted. More likely, Congress, in my view, is going to be unable to pass appropriations bills, and we will face a crisis at the end of this year that could lead to a complete Government shutdown.

I want to address each of these problems in turn, Mr. President.

Medicare's hospital insurance trust fund is now expected to become insolvent in the year 2008. It is critical that we address this problem and we do it soon. We need to modernize and reform the program to make it function more efficiently, but it is clear that also we will need additional resources.

As part of an overall solution, President Clinton proposed allocating 15 percent of projected unified budget surpluses for Medicare. This would extend the solvency of the trust fund for another 12 years, to 2020. Unfortunately,