Kosovo it is clear to me that we must support strategic airlift. Airlift remains one of the largest challenges for our forces. I urge the Air Force to act to resolve this issue with expediency and consider designating the C-5 or the C-17 airframe for the future of the Tennessee Air Guard.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, let me assure the Senator from Tennessee that I am confident working with the Armed Services Committee and the Air Force that this issue will be resolved soon.

MEDAL OF HONOR TO ALFRED RASCON 1999

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I am pleased to be an original cosponsor of the amendment which recommends the Congressional Medal of Honor be awarded to Mr. Alfred P. Rascon. I would like to take just a moment and introduce you to Mr. Rascon.

Alfred Rascon was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, and emigrated to the United States with his parents in the 1950’s. He served two tours in Vietnam, one as a medic. When Rascon volunteered for the service, he was not yet a citizen but was a lawful permanent resident, and he was only 17 years of age but convinced his mother to sign his papers so he could enlist.

On March 16, 1966, then Specialist Alfred Rascon, while serving in Vietnam, performed a series of heroic acts that words simply cannot describe. For Rascon and the seven soldiers he aided while under direct gunfire, that day will long be remembered. Rascon’s platoon found itself in a desperate situation under heavy fire by a powerful North Vietnamese force. When an American machine gunner went down and a medic was called for, Rascon, 20 at the time, ignored his orders to remain under cover and rushed down the trail amid an onslaught of enemy gunfire and grenades. To better protect the wounded soldier, Rascon placed his body between the enemy machine gun fire and this soldier. Rascon jolted as he was shot in the hip. Although wounded, he managed to drag this soldier off the trail. Rascon soon discovered the man he was dragging was dead.

Specialist 4th Class Larry Gibson crawled forward looking for ammunition. The other machine gunner lay dead, and Gibson had no ammunition with which to defend the platoon. Rascon grabbed the dead soldier’s ammunition and gave it to Gibson. Then, amid relentless enemy fire and grenades, Rascon hobbled back up the trail and snared the dead soldier’s machine gun and, most important, 400 rounds of additional ammunition. Eye-witnesses state that this act alone saved the entire platoon from annihilation.

The pace quickened and grenades continued to fall. One ripped open Rascon’s face, but this did not stop him. He saw another grenade drop five feet from a wounded Neil Haffy. He tackled Haffy and absorbed the grenade blast himself, saving Haffy’s life.

Though severely wounded, Rascon crawled forward looking for ammunition and provided aid. A few minutes later, Rascon witnessed Sergeant Ray Compton being hit by gunfire. As Rascon moved toward him, another grenade dropped. Instead of seeking cover, Rascon dove on top of the wounded sergeant and again absorbed the blow. This time the explosion smashed through Rascon’s helmet and ripped into his scalp. Compton’s life was spared.

When the firefight ended, Rascon refused aid for himself until the other wounded were evacuated. So bloodied by the conflict was Rascon that when soldiers placed him on the evacuation helicopter, a chaplain saw his condition and gave him last rites. But Alfred was not yet a citizen. Rascon replied, “I am an American in my heart.”

Perhaps the best description of Alfred Rascon’s actions came 30 years later from fellow platoon member Larry Gibson:

I was a 19-year-old gunner with a recon section. We were under intense and accurate enemy fire that had pinned down the point squad, making it impossible to move without being killed. Unhesitatingly, Doc [as Rascon was called] went forward to aid the wounded and dying. I was one of the wounded. Doc took the brunt of several enemy grenades, shielding the wounded with his body.

In these few words, I cannot fully describe the events of that day. The acts of unselfish heroism Doc performed while saving the many wounded, though severely wounded himself, speak for themselves. This country needs genuine heroes. Doc Rascon is one of those.

Rascon was once asked why he acted with such courage on the battle field even though he was an immigrant and not yet a citizen. Rascon replied, “I was always an American in my heart.”

Mr. President, these actions speak to the American who serves his nation today. In the course of our conversation I learned of his amazing story, and as the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee at that time, I realized I had to act.

I contacted a number of officials at the Department of Defense and learned that his case could not even be examined because the law said time to consider those awards had expired. So, in the 1996 Defense Authorization Bill, we changed the law to allow for the review of these cases.

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Mr. PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection it is so ordered.

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS—H.R. 1664

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon the Committee on Appropriations met and reported, en bloc, the Fiscal Year 2000 Department of Defense Appropriation Bill, the Fiscal Year 2000 302(b) allocations for the committee, and H.R. 1664, by a recorded vote of 24-3. At that full committee markup, the committee also adopted an explanatory statement of the committee’s recommendations in relation to H.R. 1664. That explanatory statement, which was adopted in lieu of a committee report, was filed with the Senate by Mr. STEVENS (for himself and Mr. BYRD, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SPECKER, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. HOLLINGS, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. BAYH, Mr. DEWINE, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. DASCHLE, Mr. DORGAN, and Mr. HATCH). Subsequent to that markup, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be added as cosponsors: Mrs. LINCOLN, Mr. KOHL, Mr. HELMS, and Mr. BREAUX.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection it is so ordered.

Mr. BYRD. I further ask unanimous consent that the explanatory statement of the committee be printed at the appropriate place in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EXEMPLARY STATEMENT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS ON H.R. 1664, A BILL MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR OPERATIONS IN KOSOVO

Mr. Stevens (for himself and Mr. BYRD, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SPECKER, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. HOLLINGS, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. BAYH, Mr. DEWINE,