

May 25, 2000

FLOYD D. SPENCE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001

SPEECH OF

**HON. PATRICK J. KENNEDY**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 18, 2000

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4205) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2001, and for other purposes:

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Chairman, the Navy resumed training on the Atlantic Fleet bombing range in Vieques after Federal Agents cleared the bombing range of protesters. Unfortunately, a very tense situation remains. Yet we in the legislature, instead of leaving in place the agreement reached by the President, the governor of Puerto Rico and the Secretaries of Defense and Navy, we tried to add fuel to the fire with a provision in H.R. 4205 that unilaterally undermined a deal where concessions were made on all sides.

I am pleased with the passage of Mr. SKELTON's amendment and celebrate our victory in striking out the deal breaking language in H.R. 4205 and reinstating our agreement with Pedro Rossello, Governor of Puerto Rico. Let us recall that the agreement reached last January is a deal where concessions were made by both sides—negotiators had worked in good faith to reconcile the vital need for training with the legitimate concerns of the people of Vieques. Mr. SKELTON's amendment leaves in place the compromise agreement for the orderly transfer of land on the Western side of Vieques, land not utilized by the Navy, to Puerto Rico. I urge the continuation of the President's deal as H.R. 4205 moves toward conference.

One thing is evident, our actions influenced the Navy's ability to continue crucial training on Vieques. We simply would have done a disservice to our sailors and their readiness if our legislative actions somehow led to more unrest in Puerto Rico. Let us not forget that the Navy has not been the best of neighbors to the American citizens of Vieques. Since the early days of World War II, the people of Vieques have been exposed to bombing raids 180 days of each year. Unfortunately, a little over a year ago, a bomb fell 2 miles off target, killing Mr. David Sanes Rodriguez, a civilian employee by the Navy and severely wounding four others. This tragic accident redefined and emboldened virtually all of Puerto Rico to demand for the safety, the security, and the well-being of the 9,311 Puerto Rico Americans who reside in Vieques.

Let me be clear on the point that the Skelton amendment is strongly supported by the Government of Puerto Rico. I have spoken with Governor Rossello. He told me that over 70 percent of the American citizens on Vieques live below the poverty level and that civilian residents reportedly suffer from a cancer rate 26 percent higher than that of Puerto Rico as a whole. Doctors also note high levels

## EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

of birth defects, skin diseases, asthma and other respiratory diseases. Yet without this amendment the resources that these people need would have been jeopardized.

If you are concerned about the ability of the Navy and our sailors to be militarily ready, then you will support the continuation of the President's deal in conference because it represents the quickest way for us to resume a full spread of training activities which can include live fire exercises.

The bottom line is that we have already negotiated a deal that is supported by all sides in this debate. But without the Skelton Amendment we would have had no deal. And so whether you are coming at this debate from a military or Puerto Rican perspective you can be sure that supporting the President's deal is the right thing to do.

REMEMBERING LANCE CORPORAL KEOKI P. SANTOS AND LANCE CORPORAL SETH JONES

**HON. DARLENE HOOLEY**

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, on April 8, 2000 nineteen U.S. Marines were killed in the Arizona desert when their MV-22 Osprey crashed during a training exercise.

Two of those Marines, Lance Corporal Keoki Santos and Lance Corporal Seth Jones, were citizens of Oregon.

Lance Corporal Santos—who was only 24 years old—was a native of Grande Ronde, a Native American confederation which I have the good fortune of representing here in Congress.

He was an outstanding Marine. Keoki was also deeply loved by his mother, Mrs. Christina Mercier.

Lance Corporal Jones, who was only 19 years old, was an equally outstanding Marine.

He too left behind grieving relatives—his mother, Ms. Michele Tytlar, lives in Portland, Oregon and his father, Mr. Daniel Jones, lives in Bend, Oregon.

Mr. Speaker, this Monday is Memorial Day. Most, if not every Member of Congress, will return home to participate in official remembrance ceremonies.

Yesterday, three flags were flown over the Capitol of the United States commemorating the bravery of Lance Corporal Santos and Lance Corporal Jones.

This Memorial Day, I will present these flags to the families of these two Marines at Willamette National Cemetery.

I will also read aloud and present each family a letter from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James L. Jones.

This letter shares the Commandant's thoughts on the service and loss of not just these men, but all nineteen of the Marines killed in this tragic accident.

We owe an enormous debt to every American soldier, sailor, flyer, and Marine.

As we all return home this weekend to observe Memorial Day, we must remember those who served our Nation in uniform and now lie in eternal rest.

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EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR INCREASED APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE INS OMAHA DISTRICT OFFICE

**HON. DOUG BEREUTER**

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member would commend to his colleagues the following editorial from the May 12, 2000, edition of the Omaha World-Herald.

As the editorial correctly notes, the Omaha District Office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), which serves Nebraska and Iowa, has experienced a dramatic increase in demand for the services it provides. Despite the on-going efforts of the Nebraska and Iowa Congressional Delegations, on behalf of their constituents, to bring attention to this untenable situation and also to the lack of resources committed to the enforcement of immigration laws in this country's interior states, INS officials at the Federal and regional levels remain unresponsive. This Member and several of his colleagues from Nebraska and Iowa feel that the problems must now be addressed through the appropriations process.

This Member hopes that his colleagues in the House of Representatives will favorably review the requests outlined in the editorial and that they will increase assistance to INS operations not only in Nebraska and Iowa but in this country's interior region as a whole.

[From the Omaha World-Herald, May 12, 2000]

### SHOW THEM THE MONEY

The figures are as solid as they are daunting: The Omaha office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service has a backlog of more than 5,000 cases. Over the last five years, it has seen a 400 percent increase in the number of documents processed. Workloads like that can't be handled with smoke and mirrors. Warm bodies must be in place, and that place needs to be safe and efficient. Some members of Congress clearly understand the problem, and they are commendably committed to solving it.

Last week the entire Nebraska congressional delegation, joined by Rep. Jim Leach of Iowa, wrote to colleagues whose committees oversee spending for the INS. The request was for them to earmark enough money (about \$119,000 yearly) to add two immigration information officers and two clerical positions to the local office.

This request for a direct appropriation wouldn't have been necessary if Mark Reed, director of the INS Central Region, had responded to these officials' 1999 request to flesh out the office's ability to respond to public needs. It's hard to fathom why he didn't.

Now, Nebraska's three House members have approached the chair of the appropriate subcommittee about getting a one-time injection of \$2 million to relocate the Omaha INS branch to new quarters, possibly near Eppley Airfield.

If the lawmakers are successful in these efforts, that will address the local agency's two biggest problems: a personnel shortage and an inadequate physical plant. It's about time something was done. The modern-day trend toward more and more newcomers argues that from an operational standpoint,