

the very top of 20 executive branch agencies because, and I am quoting now, "because its top notch planning and performance budgeting overcame short staffing and fraying equipment." It all came down, they concluded, to what I mentioned earlier, the curse. The "Curse of the Can-Do." "The Coast Guard," they said, "is a can-do organization whose 'can' is dwindling while its 'do' is growing."

This just simply cannot continue, not when the average age of its deep water cutters is 27 years old, making this the second oldest naval fleet on the planet; not when fixed-wing aircraft deployments have more than doubled, and helicopter deployments are up more than 25 percent without any increase in the number of aircraft, pilots or crews; not when duty officers suffer chronic fatigue because staffing constraints permit only 4 hours of sleep at night; and not when the United States Coast Guard commandant testifies before Congress that there is not enough fuel to power the United States Coast Guard fleet; and not when the Coast Guard radio communication units are 30 years old, like the one described in a recent news account that began this way, and again I am quoting: "If you dial 911, say the word 'fire' and run outside, a fire engine will show up at your driveway. If you pick up the handset on your VHF-FM radio, say the word 'Mayday' and jump overboard, you could very well drown or die of hypothermia."

Study after study has documented these hazards. A recent interagency task force concluded that obsolescence presents a threat that the Coast Guard could soon be overwhelmed by a mismatch between its missions and the quantity and quality of the assets necessary to carry them out.

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A 1997 General Accounting Office review was even more blunt. It projected \$90 million in annual reductions in operating expenses just to bridge the gap. The GAO was alarmed by the sheer size of the gap and the dwindling number of available efficiency-related options.

Well, where I am from, a marine distress call is an urgent plea for emergency law enforcement and rescue personnel. When oil spills jeopardize economic as well as environmental resources, when frozen rivers trap heating oil barges, when the well-being of both fish and fishermen are threatened, when offshore danger strikes, we know where to turn, to the United States Coast Guard.

That is why when the ink dried on the House Department of Transportation appropriation, there was reason for new and genuine hope. It was like having Pedro Martinez in the starting rotation, it felt like this really could be the year.

Well, the bill approved recently for next year increases Coast Guard ac-

counts by nearly \$600 million, a 15-percent boost. It also includes \$125 million to help modernize aging planes, helicopters, and motor lifeboats and upgrade rather than abandon Coast Guard stations in the communities that they serve.

Years from now, the 395 Members of this House who voted for that bill can look back and take satisfaction from the knowledge that they helped save a life, a coastal community, an international alliance, and maybe even a marine species or two. But that old curse still hovers over the Coast Guard, the curse of the "can do."

Just this week, the Senate came in at \$250 million less than the House appropriation. The timing could not be worse. The Senate action followed two recent rounds of Coast Guard cutbacks for the current fiscal year, reducing cutter days and flight hours by 10 percent.

I wonder if the men on the fishing vessel that are being rescued in this picture to my right would approve of a 10-percent reduction, meaning a slower response time. I ask my colleagues and the American people to reflect on this photo and the reduction that I just mentioned.

Why? Because the Coast Guard responded to natural disasters but the Congress failed to pass emergency supplemental funding and because a variety of overdue personnel benefits for everything from housing to health care were mandated by the current defense authorization but with no money to pay for those increased costs.

There is more. The good news is a new effort through the pending military construction bill to restore \$800 million in supplemental funds. But since only a third of that is designated as emergency expenses, the baseline for future Coast Guard budgets next year and beyond would be seriously compromised.

So I rise today to express gratitude for the progress made in this chamber so far but also to raise a warning flag about the two challenges immediately ahead.

Specifically, I urge my colleagues to hold firm in conference on the House approved allocation in the transportation appropriation bill and then to recede to Senate conferees regarding the \$800 million in the MILCON measure. That is what it will take for the Coast Guard to do the job we have assigned to it, to contain oil spills, to catch smugglers, and, most important of all, to save lives.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today after 12:00 p.m. on account of official business.

Mr. POMEROY (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today and June 26 on account of official business in the district.

Mr. CANADY of Florida (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today on account of attending a funeral.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCDERMOTT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. ALLEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. CLAYTON, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. TIAHRT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, June 28.

Mr. FOLEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHAFFER, for 5 minutes, June 28.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at their own request) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. HOYER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HUNTER, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, June 26, 2000, at 12:30 p.m., for morning hour debates.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

8323. A letter from the Associate Administrator, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, PACA Branch, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act: Recognizing Limited Liability Companies [Docket No. FV99-361] received May 5, 2000, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

8324. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Asian Longhorned Beetle; Addition to