BURMA MILITARY PURCHASES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the illegitimate regime in Rangoon has once again shown its true colors. On this 12th anniversary of the fall of Peking in Washington, I want to draw the attention of my colleagues to gathering storm clouds in Southeast Asia.

According to Jane's Defence Weekly, Burma's State Peace and Development Council, SPDC, has signed a contract to purchase 10 MIG-29 fighter aircraft from the Russian Aircraft-building Corporation. These fighters were built in the early 1980s and are being stored at the Lakhovitsy machine-building plant. The total cost of the 10 MIGs to the SPDC is $130 million, 30 percent of which will be paid up front and the balance settled over the next decade.

This purchase is troubling for several reasons. First, the winner of the 22 Chengdu F-7M and Nanchang A-5C currently sitting on Burmese runways. Tensions between the Thais and the junta have already spilled over into exchanges of gunfire and mortars; an escalation to an air war would be destabilizing to the entire region. China may be the only country to view the sale in a positive light, as it strengthens the military capability of one its staunchest allies in the region.

From drug dealing to the forced use of child soldiers, the Burmese military has distinguished itself as a world's leading violator of human rights and dignity. This purchase serves as evidence that the regime is committed to remaining in power at any and all costs. The international community must now double its efforts to ensure that even greater human rights abuses are not waged against the innocent people of Burma by the military, which is corrupt to the core.

Finally, the sale is an indication that the Russians are willing to sell military hardware to anyone, anywhere. We can add Burma to the growing list, which includes Iran and North Korea, of Russian client countries.

RACISM

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today I rise to call attention to racism in our society.

There are certain moments when we are reminded that it exists, and that it is a very ugly thing. Recently, the Committee of 100, a group of prominent Chinese-Americans, published a survey that measured attitudes toward Asian-Americans, especially those of Chinese descent. It was the first such comprehensive survey—the group wanted to establish a baseline that can be compared to future studies so that we can determine whether racist attitudes against Chinese-Americans are rising or falling.

The result of this first survey was disheartening. Apparently, one-quarter of Americans hold "very negative attitudes" toward Chinese-Americans, and one-third think that Chinese-Americans are more likely to be loyal to China than to the United States. Stop and think about that: a charge of disloyalty is a sensational accusation when it is leveled by one American against another. This survey suggests that 90 million people in this country accuse millions of their fellow Americans of disloyalty.

The same poll also tested attitudes toward Asian-Americans in general, with similar results. Twenty-four percent of Americans would be upset if someone in their family married an Asian-American; 22 percent would be uncomfortable voting for an Asian-American; and 17 percent would be disappointed if an Asian-American moved into their neighborhood.

Prejudice toward Chinese-Americans, and toward Asian-Americans in general, is not unique. Immigrants from all parts of the world have been stereotyped and reviled at some point in our history, and many groups continue to face these attitudes today. I chose to focus on Chinese-Americans today only because the survey so surprised and concerned me.

Chinese immigrants began entering the country in large numbers in the 1850's. They were initially welcomed in the tight labor market of the rapidly expanding West. In fact, American industry brought many of the immigrants from China as contract laborers. Some of these immigrants toiled in gold mines and on the transcontinental railroad. Others worked in vineyards and fruit farms in California or on sugar plantations in Hawaii. Still others opened grocery stores, laundries, and other businesses.

But as labor became more plentiful and the gold rush petered out, public sentiment toward these immigrants turned against them. In 1880, California passed a statute forbidding marriage of a white person to a Chinese, Mulatto, or Mongolian. The federal government passed the Cable Act in 1922, revoking the citizenship of any American woman who married an Asian man. It wasn't until 1967 that the Supreme Court struck down these laws.

Another indignity that immigrants faced was the system of "anti-miscegenation" laws against intermarriage. In 1880, California passed a statute forbidding marriage of a white person to an Asian, Negro, Mulatto, or Mongolian. The federal government passed the Cable Act in 1922, revoking the citizenship of any American woman who married an Asian man. It wasn't until 1967 that the Supreme Court struck down these laws.

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American people, to combat racism in our society, to raise awareness of how racism damages our nation and our society, to point to the ideals that bind us together as citizens of this great nation. Thank you.

SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. COAST GUARD

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to thank the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, Senators BYRD and STEVENS, for working with me and so many others in support of the $92 million for the U.S. Coast Guard. This funding was included in the 2001 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill we recently passed.

The Coast Guard needs this assistance to meet basic operational expenses and fund unexpected fiscal year 2001 budget requirements. We must support the critical services that the Coast Guard performs across the country. By passing this bill, we have demonstrated our strong support for its missions and will help it stay in the business of saving lives.

Known as “the rescue expert,” our Coast Guard responds to 40,000 search and rescue cases each year, saving 3,800 lives. And, though it is the rescue and response missions that get the headlines, the Coast Guard also is very dedicated to preventing emergencies. The Coast Guard inspects all commercial ships—including cargo ships, tankers, and cruise ships.

There are many other ways that the Coast Guard protects our citizens. One major component of Coast Guard operations is drug interdiction. Last year, the Coast Guard seized more than 66 tons of cocaine, with a street value of $4 billion—that’s more than the total operating cost of the entire Coast Guard.

Perhaps one of the Coast Guard’s toughest jobs is the day to day enforcement of U.S. immigration law. Coast Guard men and women are challenged daily to carry out their responsibilities with due regard for the law, human dignity, and above all, the safety of human life. It is a tough job, and each case is unique. But day in and day out, the Coast Guard continues to carry out its duties with professionalism and a never-ending commitment to those it serves.

These are just some of the vital missions the Coast Guard conducts. But the Coast Guard is reaching the point where it is stretched so thin and the condition of its equipment is so poor that I fear it will no longer be able to sustain daily operations.

When compared to 41 other maritime agencies around the world, the ships that make up our Coast Guard fleet of cutters are the 38th oldest. Because the fleet is so old, the Coast Guard has had to spend twice as much money to fix equipment and hull problems. This is a very serious problem, Mr. President. It is a problem that does not result from mismanagement, but rather, it is a problem that has resulted from a continual lack of adequate funding for our Coast Guard.

We need to provide the Coast Guard with the resources necessary so the American people can have the services that they require and deserve. The funding included in the 2001 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill certainly will help keep our Coast Guard afloat. And, we must remain committed to ensuring that our Coast Guard has adequate resources not just now, but well into the future.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on this vital issue.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator Kennedy in March of this year. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred March 13, 1998 in San Francisco, California. A gay man, Brian Wilmes, 45, was beaten to death allegedly by another man who yelled anti-gay epithets and then fled with a woman. Edgar Mora, 25, was charged with murder.

I believe that government’s first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become and have the power that I believe that by passing this legislation, we can change hearts and minds as well.

RURAL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. CARNAHAN. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge a group of courageous young men and women from Canton, MO. They are visiting the Nation’s capital this week.

The group’s journey began more than a year ago on a two-lane road in northeast Missouri. Seventeen-year-old Kristin Hendrickson was killed on Highway 61 when her car struck another vehicle head on. A four-lane road with a divider might have saved her life.

Kristin was just a few months away from graduation at Canton R-5 High School. Her unused prom dress hung in her closet, a reminder of how full of life she had been.

Kristin’s friends tried to make sense of what happened, but rather, it is a determined to make something positive out of this terrible loss, they started a grassroots movement: Students of Missouri Assisting Rural & Urban Transportation, or SMART. Their goal was to “promote and ensure the safety of rural transportation needs in the State of Missouri.”

Many of the students who created SMART graduated a few weeks later, but younger students carried on the work. And those who graduated stayed involved as advisors.

The group developed four objectives: First, to educate the public on the need to improve local transportation; Second, to grow into other local districts, and then move statewide; Third, to lobby legislators for funding to improve rural transportation; and Fourth, to contact candidates for statewide office for their position on transportation, and use this information to educate the public.

SMART has also become a powerful advocacy group in Missouri. Just 2 months after the organization was founded, the nonpartisan group made a presentation at a meeting of the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission. Their members have also addressed the Missouri Governor’s Conference on Transportation. Representatives of the group have met personally with Missouri Governor Bob Holden and members of the Missouri General Assembly to encourage additional funding for rural transportation projects.

But their greatest victory to date came in January when the Missouri Department of Transportation announced that it would upgrade more than 10 miles of highway 61 between Canton and LaGrange to a four-lane road.

Although the victory came too late for Kristin, there is no way to know how many lives it will save in the years to come. It would not have happened without the forceful activism of these young people.

I am extremely proud of these young people. Not only because of what they accomplished, but because of what they still intend to accomplish. They are not yet satisfied, and we have not heard the last of them.

The group continues to organize similar groups throughout Missouri. They have come to Washington this week to encourage Members of Congress to support highway safety and to advocate for additional federal resources for transportation infrastructure.

These committed young people can teach us all a lesson about how to get things done. The example they have set is not just valuable for other young people, but also for adults who have grown cynical about the political process. These young leaders have shown that you can make a difference—through action and determination. And I intend to work with them to increase the Federal Government’s investment in our Nation’s highways.