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Senate

(Legislative day of Monday, July 10, 1995)

The Senate met at 9 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. We have a guest chaplain, Father Stephen Leva, St. Ann Church, Arlington, VA. He is the guest of Senator JOHN WARNER.

PRAYER

The guest chaplain, Father Stephen Leva, St. Ann Church, Arlington, VA, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

Almighty and eternal God: You have revealed Your glory to all nations. God of power and might, wisdom and justice, through You, authority is rightly administered, laws are enacted, and judgment is decreed. Assist with Your spirit of counsel and fortitude these women and men that they may be blessed with an abundance of wisdom and right judgment. May they encourage due respect for virtue; execute the law with justice and mercy; and seek the good of all the people of the United States.

Let the light of Your divine wisdom direct their deliberations and shine forth in all proceedings and laws framed for our rule and government. May they seek to preserve peace, promote civic happiness, and continue to bring us the blessings of liberty and equality. We likewise commend to Your unbounded mercy all the citizens of the United States; that they may be blessed in the knowledge and sanctified in the observance of Your law. May we be preserved in union and that peace which the world cannot give; and, after enjoying the blessings of this life, be admitted to those which are eternal. In Your holy name. Amen.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HUTCHISON). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to consideration of S. 1026, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1026) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1996 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill.

Mr. THURMOND. Madam President, today the Senate begins consideration of S. 1026, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1996. The bill we bring to the floor incorporates the Armed Services Committee's best judgments on the Nation's defense requirements. It is based on many long hours of testimony, analysis, debate, and consideration of opposing views.

I would like to thank the distinguished ranking member of the committee, Senator NUNN, for his outstanding leadership, and for his open, fair, and bi-partisan manner. I would also like to thank the members of the committee and the professional staff for their dedication and hard work.

It has been a privilege to work with Senator NUNN to bring this bill to the Senate. Although it is a good bill, not every Member, including me, is happy with every part of it. Throughout the past 6 months the committee worked in its traditional bipartisan manner because the security of the United States and the safety of our people are paramount. The bill reflects this cooperative effort, provides a clear direction for national security, and maintains a solid foundation for the defense of the Nation.

The committee's overarching intent was to revitalize the Armed Forces and enhance or preserve our national security capabilities. That is essential in this post-cold-war world in order to provide the leadership and stability which are critical to the growth of democracy. Our military must be capable and ready in order to provide our men and women in uniform the best possible chance to succeed and survive in every demanding situation. We were reminded recently, with the dedication of the Korean War Memorial, that freedom is not free. We must always remember that courage and sacrifice are the price of freedom.

This bill would fund defense at $264.7 billion in budget authority for fiscal year 1996. I have noted with interest some inaccurate reports in the press that the bill would increase defense spending, and I would like to set the record straight. The funding level in the bill we bring to the floor today is nearly $6.2 billion lower in real terms than last year's bill, and that represents a decline of 2 percent. Although it had been my hope to preserve funding at last year's level, this is the best the committee could do, given the budgetary pressures facing the Congress.

I have stated repeatedly that the administration is cutting defense too far, too fast. Most credible analysts conclude there is a shortfall of at least $150 billion in defense budget authority over the future years defense plan. Although the proposal contained in this bill represents a decline in defense spending, I would note that the funding level is still $7 billion higher than the administration's budget request. The administration requested a defense budget 5 percent lower than the fiscal year 1995 level, and that is simply unwise.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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