

fully in the search for a fair and comprehensive settlement. There is now a unique opportunity for all sides—Nationalists and Unionists—working with the two Governments to advance the cause of peace.

We pledge to continue to do all we can to support the peace process. On this St. Patrick's Day, we rededicate ourselves to working with all those who continue to be genuinely committed to the achievement of a lasting peace for Northern Ireland.

FRIENDS OF IRELAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,
UNITED STATES SENATE

Edward M. Kennedy.
Claiborne Pell.
Daniel Patrick Moynihan.
Christopher J. Dodd.

U.S. CONSUMPTION OF FOREIGN
OIL? HERE'S TODAY'S WEEKLY
BOX SCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports that, for the week ending March 8, the United States imported 7,315,000 barrels of oil daily, 506,000 barrels less than the 7,821,000 barrels imported during the same period 1 year ago, but 986,000 barrels more than the 6,329,000 barrels imported the previous week, March 1, 1996.

Americans now rely on foreign oil for more than 50 percent of their needs, and there are no signs that this upward trend will abate.

Anybody else interested in restoring domestic production of oil—by U.S. producers using American workers? Politicians better ponder the economic calamity that will occur in America if and when foreign producers shut off our supply, or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the United States—now 7,315,000 barrels a day.

CHINA AND TAIWAN

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, during the past 3 weeks, several unfortunate events that threaten peace and stability around the world have occurred. In Israel and in the skies off the Cuban coast, innocent men, women, and children have lost their lives as a result of those tragedies. Moreover, countless others continue to suffer the consequences of increased tensions between countries and groups of people who have long been separated by ideological or religious differences.

Like many of my colleagues, I have already expressed my outrage at the unnecessary tragedy in the Straits of Florida and the unconscionable suicide bombings in Israel. I want to take this opportunity to voice my strong concerns about the recent escalation of tensions between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan.

In the past week, China has taken several actions intended to intimidate the people of Taiwan and influence its upcoming presidential elections. On March 5, Beijing announced its decision to conduct guided-missile tests near Taiwan. Three days later, China

launched the first three missiles in tests it intends to conduct until March 15. On March 9, China announced its plans to conduct live-ammunition war exercises in the Strait of Taiwan until March 20, just 3 days before Taiwan's presidential elections.

As Secretary of State Warren Christopher indicated recently, these actions are "risky, and smack of intimidation and coercion." China's actions create grave risks to stability in that region. I urge China's leadership to halt these dangerous and provocative actions immediately.

Make no mistake, the risk is real. China's missile tests and military exercises are dangerous in and of themselves, and they increase the chances of an accident that could cause tensions to spiral out of control.

When China conducted similar missile tests in July and August of last year, the target areas were 85 and 80 miles north of Taiwan, respectively. By contrast, the target zone for the surface-to-surface missiles fired last week are only half as far from Taiwan, and far too close to major airline and shipping routes.

Of the three missiles launched last week, two landed near the port of Keelung which is only 23 miles from Taiwan's northern coast and approximately 30 miles from Taipei, Taiwan's capital. The third missile landed in a target zone near the port of Kaohsiun, which is only 35 miles from Taiwan's southern coast.

Thankfully, the three missiles fired last week and the one fired this week landed where the Chinese intended. However, China intends to conduct similar missile tests in the same zones. If one of these missiles should stray off-course and mistakenly land in Taiwan, or hit a ship or an airliner, the repercussions would be severe. Needless to say, under such circumstances, Taiwan could not be expected to sit idly by, and the Clinton administration has continually warned that if an accident occurs, China "will be held accountable." I would like to lend my voice to those warnings.

Even if China's missile tests and military exercises go as planned, the inevitable result is greater difficulties in the day-to-day lives of the Taiwanese people. Taiwan's stock market has already experienced a great deal of volatility, and the fluctuations would have been greater had it not been for government initiatives. Flights for commercial airlines will also be disrupted this week when aircraft will be forced to change routes to avoid China's military exercises, and shipping has been delayed or diverted to avoid the missile test zones.

Despite the heroic efforts by President Lee to keep the people of Taiwan calm during these trying times, China's threatening actions will continue to inject fear into the daily lives of the Taiwanese people. Beijing's time and efforts would be far better spent trying to communicate with Taiwan in a non-

threatening and peaceful way rather than carrying out reckless missile tests and military exercises.

Finally, Mr. President, there should be no misunderstanding that if China's missile tests and military exercises should develop into actual military action against Taiwan, the United States is well prepared to respond. The carrier U.S.S. *Independence*, accompanied by three warships, was recently ordered to move near Taiwan. Moreover, the U.S.S. *Nimitz* and five to six additional ships are expected to arrive near Taiwan before the upcoming presidential elections.

The irony is that China is conducting missile tests and military exercises in order to curb support for Taiwan independence. The fact of the matter is, most Taiwanese, as well as a majority of their elected leaders, are committed to reunification, but only reunification achieved through peaceful means.

United States policy, as spelled out in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, stipulates that the future relationship between China and Taiwan should be determined by peaceful means. I sincerely hope China will not miscalculate United States resolve in this regard. With the leadership of President Clinton, the United States stands ready to assist Taiwan if necessary. Again, I urge the People's Republic of China to cease its intimidation of Taiwan and to resolve its differences with the Taiwanese peacefully.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
FOLLOW-UP REPORT ON AGENT
ORANGE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I would like to call to our colleagues' attention important new findings on the relationship between Agent Orange exposure and certain health conditions. Earlier today, the Institute of Medicine [IOM], which is part of the National Academy of Sciences [NAS], released an update to their 1994 report, "Veterans and Agent Orange: Health Effects of Herbicides Used in Vietnam." These reports were mandated in the Agent Orange Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-4), which I authored with Senator JOHN KERRY, Senator ALAN CRANSTON and Representative LANE EVANS.

This report confirms what Vietnam veterans have long known: The Vietnam war is still claiming innocent victims.

Unfortunately, the findings announced today validate veterans' worst fears about Agent Orange—that their children are suffering serious health consequences as a result of their parents' military service.

The report found evidence suggestive of an association between veterans' exposure to Agent Orange and the presence of a severe form of spina bifida in their children.

This type of spina bifida is an incurable birth defect characterized by a deformity in the spinal cord that often results in serious neurological problems, which require lifelong medical