

I will not use all the time I have yielded myself.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE U.S. RELATIONSHIP WITH KUWAIT

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I rise on an issue of great importance to me, personally, and I believe many other Members of the Senate.

Winston Churchill once noted that nations whose sons fight and die together forever change their relationship. Seven years ago, the United States and Kuwait tragically shared this experience. The liberation of Kuwait forever changed the relationships between our two peoples. Though our cultures and the faiths of many are different, we share a sense of national independence and, I believe, a growing awareness of a burgeoning potential for democracy in Kuwait.

It was, therefore, extremely disturbing on November 19, 1997, when several members of the Islamic faction in Parliament in Kuwait sought the ouster of the Minister of Information, Sheikh Saud Al-Nasir Al-Sabah. It did so because of an allegation that he permitted books to be displayed at a book fair which fundamentalists deemed to be offensive. Members of this Senate—indeed, many people in the administration—not only know Sheikh Saud Al-Nasir Al-Sabah well, they consider him a friend. During the darkest days of the invasion and occupation of Kuwait, he was the voice of that Nation in the United States. We trusted him. More, perhaps, than anyone we know in Kuwaiti society, he rallied support to the liberation of his country.

These allegations against him we now recognize were little more than an effort by Islamic fundamentalists to extend their control over the Ministry of Information, which would have changed the nature of the political system in Kuwait. Judgments about Kuwait's future are for the Kuwaiti people, obviously, and entirely. But I believe as friends of that Nation who have fought and died with them, we all have a stake in the growing movement of that society for free expression.

I know my colleagues join me with some relief and considerable pride in that in a reformed Government following this incident, Sheikh Saud Al-Nasir Al-Sabah was kept as Oil Minister. Indeed, not only did he remain in the Government, therefore, but he received a promotion.

I know the people of Kuwait have been traumatized by this effort, through this emergence of Islamic factions within their political system, to extend their control and threaten rising elements of democracy in their society. I trust that Kuwaiti democracy will be the stronger for this experience, that the people of Kuwait will not only understand but appreciate the interests of the U.S. Senate in the political system of that country, since the concept of the government and free expression in Kuwait is so much a part of our mu-

tual understanding for the defense of that society.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1999

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 2057, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2057) to authorize appropriations for the fiscal year 1999 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personal strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a list of staff that I send to the desk, be permitted the privilege of the floor during the pendency of the Department of Defense authorization bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The list of staff follows:

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE STAFF MEMBERS

Les Brownlee, Staff Director
George Lauffer, Deputy Staff Director
Scott Stucky, General Counsel
David Lyles, Minority Staff Director
Peter Levine, Minority Counsel
Charlie Abell
John R. Barnes
Stuart H. Cain
Lucia Monica Chavez
Christine E. Cowart
Daniel J. Cox, Jr.
Madelyn R. Creedon
Richard D. DeBobes
John DeCrosta
Marie F. Dickinson
Keaveny Donovan
Shawn H. Edwards
Jonathan L. Etherton
Pamela L. Farrell
Richard W. Fieldhouse
Maria A. Finley
Cristina W. Fiori
Jan Gordon
Creighton Greene
Gary M. Hall
Patrick "PT" Henry
Larry J. Hoag
Andrew W. Johnson
Melinda M. Koutsoumpas
Lawrence J. Lanzillotta
Henry C. Leventis
Paul M. Longworth
Stephen L. Madey, Jr.
Michael J. McCord
J. Reaves McLeod
John H. Miller
Ann M. Mittermeyer
Bert K. Mizusawa
Cindy Pearson
Sharen E. Reaves
Sarah J. Ritch
Moultrie D. Roberts
Cord A. Sterling
Eric H. Thoemmes

Roslyne D. Turner

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, today the Senate begins consideration of S-2057, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999. I want to thank all members of the Committee who have worked so hard this year to bring this bill to the floor. I particularly want to thank Senator LEVIN, the Ranking Member, for his cooperative support.

I also want to acknowledge the contributions of Senator COATS, Senator KEMPTHORNE, and Senator GLENN. This will be their last defense authorization bill. On behalf of the committee and the Senate, I want to thank them for their dedication to the national security of our country and their support for the young men and women who serve in our armed forces. We will miss these three outstanding Senators who have served our country and the committee so well.

Mr. President, I also want to express my appreciation to the members of the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee. We on the Committee are very proud of our staff. I believe that we have the most competent and professional staff on Capitol Hill. They work well together in a very bipartisan way and all of us on the Committee are indebted to them for their selfless dedication. I ask unanimous consent that a list of the members of the staff be included following my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. THURMOND. This is the 40th defense authorization bill on which I have worked since I joined the Armed Services Committee in 1959. It is my fourth as Chairman of the committee and as I indicated earlier this year, while I intend to remain on the Committee, this will be my last year as Chairman. I look forward to the floor debate on this bill as well as the conference with the House. I am hopeful that we are able to complete the bill and send it to the President before the July 4th recess. It is essential that we complete floor action before the Memorial Day recess in order to meet this ambitious schedule.

We have accelerated significantly our process this year. I cannot recall ever bringing the defense authorization bill to the floor this early in the year. If we are successful in completing conference in late June, we may be setting a modern day record.

Mr. President, the Defense Authorization bill for Fiscal Year 1999 which I bring before the Senate today is only 3.1 percent of Gross Domestic Product—the lowest since 1940. Defense outlays peaked in 1986 at 6.5 percent. President Reagan's defense buildup was one of the great investments in our history. As a result of President Reagan's strong leadership and our strengthened military, we won the Cold War. Therefore, we have been able to reduce our defense force structure. These reductions enabled the Nation to reduce the