

We need missile defense not just because of the capabilities of particular countries, but because of the larger problem: The proliferation of missile technology has created a world in which we can no longer afford to leave ourselves vulnerable to an entire class of weapons. Remaining vulnerable only guarantees that some nation will seize upon this vulnerability and take the United States and our allies by surprise.

The Bush administration's resolve to deploy missile defenses is an essential first step in modernizing our national security assets. Because of the neglect our missile defense program has suffered over the last eight years, we now face a threat against which we will have no defense for several years. Because of decisions made by the previous administration, the only long-range missile defense we have in the near-term will be the ground-based system planned for initial deployment in Alaska. Additional resources must be provided so that other technologies and basing modes can be developed and tested. But now, we must move forward as fast as we can with the technology we have today. We must not prolong our vulnerability by waiting for newer and better technology. Therefore, it is important that the administration immediately begin construction of the NMD radar at Shemya, AK. Construction of the national missile defense radar at Shemya, AK, should begin immediately.

Construction of this radar was to have begun this May, but last September President Clinton postponed the decision to proceed, citing delays with other elements of the system and a lack of progress in convincing Russia to modernize the ABM Treaty to permit NMB deployment. However, construction of the Shemya radar is the so-called "long-lead" item in deployment of the NMD system; it is the step that takes the longest and must begin the soonest. Delaying construction of the NMD radar means delaying deployment of the entire system, and we cannot afford more unnecessary delays in this program.

There is still time to recover from the delays caused by President Clinton's postponement last fall. The radar design is complete, the funds have been appropriated, and any missile defense system we build will have to begin with an X-band radar at Shemya. So we should get on with it.

Beginning construction of the Shemya radar will be a demonstration of the determination of our government to fulfill its first constitutional duty, which is to provide for the security of our Nation. It will send an unmistakable signal to all—friend or potential foe—that the United States will not remain vulnerable any longer to those who threaten us with ballistic missiles.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, before I propound a unanimous consent request,

I want to make some brief comments on the bill that I expect to call up.

HONORING PAUL D. COVERDELL

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, many of us in the Senate still greatly miss our distinguished and honorable colleague from Georgia, Paul Coverdell. There are not many days that go by that I do not think about him when I am working in this Chamber and in my office. We really have been grieving and thinking an awful lot about him over the months since his unfortunate early passing away as a result of his problems last year when he had a cerebral hemorrhage.

He was an extraordinary public servant. We all wanted to find a way to express our sorrow and to appropriately honor him. In that vein, I wanted to make sure we did not just have a rush to judgment of what we might try to do to honor him—doing it in several little ways but never an appropriate way.

After discussion on both sides of the aisle and getting approval of the Democratic leader, I asked four of our colleagues to serve as an informal task force to come up with an appropriate way to honor Senator Coverdell. These four Senators, two from each side of the aisle, were good friends and worked closely with Paul. They had a personal interest in it.

I thank Senator GRAMM of Texas, Senator DEWINE of Ohio, Senator HARRY REID of Nevada, and Senator ZELL MILLER of Georgia for taking the time to think about this, meeting together and coming up with ideas of how to appropriately honor Senator Coverdell.

That is how this bill came into being. A lot of ideas were considered. They were discussed with Senator Coverdell's former staff members, family, particularly his wife, and they came up with the suggestion that is included in this bill.

I thank Senator DASCHLE and Senator REID for being willing to be involved in this process. As a result of their efforts, we now have a bill.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—A BILL HONORING PAUL D. COVERDELL

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of a bill at the desk which honors Senator Paul D. Coverdell by naming the Peace Corps headquarters after our former colleague. I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be read the third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COCHRAN). Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator reserves the right to object.

Mr. REID. As the majority leader has indicated, a significant amount of time

has been spent on this matter. I remember as if it was yesterday Senator LOTT coming on the floor and making the announcement. It was a sad day in the history of this Senate, in the history of the State of Georgia, and certainly our country.

Those of us who knew Senator Coverdell know how closely he was associated with the majority leader and how he loved this institution. What the leader has said is very true. I worked with Senator MILLER, Senator GRAMM, and Senator DEWINE to come up with something that is appropriate. We think we have done that.

I do, though, have to object for one of the other Members of the Senate. It is something which is procedural in nature. I am confident we can work this out. I ask that the leader be understanding and that this matter be brought up after we get back from our next recess. I am confident in that period of time we will take care of the kinks. I would rather we do it that way than pass pieces of it.

I talked with Senator GRAMM and Senator MILLER, and we agreed to do it all at once rather than piecemeal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada objects.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, while I feel the objection is certainly unfortunate, I know that Senator REID wants to find a way to work through the problem that may exist. I will be glad to work with him and Senator MILLER.

Senator MILLER has been very generous with his time and very committed to this process. I talked with him a couple of times—just yesterday—to try to work through this. It is my expectation we will be able to clear this bill and take it up for consideration. It really is noncontroversial, and I believe it should be passed by unanimous consent.

I hope Members who do have a problem, or if there is a procedural problem, will find a way to work through it so we can honor this noble and respected Member. I invite Senator REID and any others to comment on the process, and if they have any remedy they can suggest, I am anxious to hear from them. I know effort is already underway to do that, and I know they will continue.

It will be my intent to file cloture on this matter if it is necessary prior to the recess of the Senate this week. I hope and expect we will not have to do that, but because of the requirements of S. Res. 8, if I have to file cloture, I will have to wait the requisite 12 hours now before filing the cloture on an amendable item, so I will have to begin the process.

Rather than leave it in that vein, I prefer we talk and we work this out and find a way to get it cleared and agreed to tomorrow before we leave for the Presidents Day recess.

Mr. REID. I appreciate the leader's comments. I would appreciate very much the leader not filing cloture. We do not need that or want that on this piece of legislation.