

commend the past success and continued contributions of those men and women of our Armed Services who comprise the United States European Command.

This Thursday, August 1, the U.S. European Command will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Over the last 50 years the European Command has played a critical part in the successful preservation of peace and stability in and around Europe, and they continue to do so today.

For more than 35 years during the cold war, the primary mission of the European Command Headquarters, established in Frankfurt, Germany in 1952, was to fulfill United States treaty obligations to NATO by providing combat ready forces to counter the Soviet threat and ensure peace in Europe, Africa and portions of the Middle East.

With the collapse of the Soviet empire, the responsibilities of the European Command changed dramatically. Since that time, it has engaged in a wide spectrum of security cooperation activities that have helped ensure stability and promote Democratic and market-oriented governments in countries emerging from Communism and other authoritarian regimes.

Simultaneously, it has conducted numerous operations to end regional wars, reduce ethnic conflict and limit the suffering caused by man-made and natural disasters.

Our European Command continues to make valuable contributions today. To conduct security cooperation activities and respond to regional threats to our national interests, The Command typically has approximately 117,000 service members, or about eight percent of the U.S. active duty military. This is a small investment by any measure for such a vast range of responsibilities across Europe, the Middle East and two-thirds of Africa.

As I speak, the European Command is involved in five on-going combat operations. Its forces are patrolling the skies over the northern no-fly zone to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolutions against Iraq as part of Operation Northern Watch.

In Bosnia and Kosovo, the European Command contributes with our NATO allies in Operations Joint Forge and Joint Guardian respectively, to ensure security, promote stability and allow those fragmented societies to rebuild their civil institutions and restore the rule of law.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, it is providing on-call support to the international community's monitors working there as part of Operation Amber Fox. And, U.S. European Command is making substantial contributions to Operation Enduring Freedom and to the global war on terrorism in general. Most recently, it deployed a small force to the Republic of Georgia to train and equip their forces to more effectively protect their own territorial integrity.

The invaluable contributions of our military men and women working at

the Headquarters—today located in Stuttgart, Germany—have continued without interruption.

The legacy of their service, dedication and accomplishments is to be highly commended, and the importance of their continued contributions to future regional peace and to the preservation of our national interests cannot be overstated.

On the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the U.S. European Command, it is fitting that we honor the millions of dedicated American men and women who have served, and continue to serve our Nation overseas.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, has 5:30 p.m. arrived?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It has.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### NOMINATION OF JULIA SMITH GIBBONS TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now go into executive session and proceed to vote on Executive Calendar No. 810, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Julia Smith Gibbons, of Tennessee, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

#### CONFIRMATION OF JUDGE JULIA SMITH GIBBONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, with today's vote, the Senate will confirm the 12th judge to our Federal courts of appeals and our 61st judicial nominee since the change in Senate majority last summer. In little more than 1 year, the Senate Judiciary Committee has already voted on 75 of this President's judicial nominees, including 15 nominees to the courts of appeals. This is more circuit and district court nominees than in any of the previous 6½ years of Republican control. In fact, we have given votes to more judicial nominees than in 1996 and 1997 combined, as well as in 1999 and 2000 combined.

Despite the partisan din about blockades and stalls and inaction as well as

absurd claims that judicial nominees are being held "hostage"—the fact is that since the change in majority last summer the Senate, and in particular the Judiciary Committee, has been working at a much faster rate than in the 6½ years of Republican control. With respect to courts of appeals nominees, we confirmed the first of President Bush's nominees last July 20 and today we confirm the 12th. That is a confirmation rate of approximately one circuit court nominee confirmed per month. By contrast, in the 76 months in which Republicans were in charge, only 46 courts of appeals judges were confirmed, at a rate closer to one every two months. Thus, despite the additional obstacles and roadblocks that the partisan practices of the new administration have created and the partisan rhetoric of our critics, we are actually achieving almost twice as much as our Republican counterparts did. With a little cooperation from the administration and the nomination of more moderate, mainstream candidates, we would be even further along.

During the 76 months under the Republican control before the Judiciary Committee was allowed to reorganize, vacancies on the Federal courts rose from 63 to 110. Vacancies on the Courts of Appeals more than doubled from 16 to 33. That is the situation created by Republican inaction and that is the situation we inherited. Since the change in majority, confirmations have gone up and vacancies have been going down.

Courts of Appeals vacancies are being decreased rather than continuing to increase, despite the high level of attrition since the shift in Senate majority last summer.

Indeed, in the last year the Judiciary Committee held the first hearing on a Fifth Circuit nominee in 7 years, the first hearing on a Tenth Circuit nominee in 6 years, the first hearing on a Sixth Circuit nominee in almost 5 years, the first hearing on a Fourth Circuit nominee in 3 years, the first hearing on a Ninth Circuit nominee in 2 years. This week we held hearings on a third nominee to the Fifth Circuit in less than a year. This contrasts with the lack of any confirmation hearing on any of President Clinton's nominees to the Fifth Circuit in the last 5½ years of Republican control of the confirmation process, despite three qualified nominees to vacancies there.

The nominee being considered today is the first nominee to the Sixth Circuit to be given a vote by the Senate since 1997.

After that, the Republican majority locked the gates and despite a number of well-qualified nominees sent to the Senate by President Clinton between 1995 and 2001, none were allowed to receive a hearing or a vote for all of 1998, 1999, 2000 and the first 3 months of 2001. Most of the vacancies that exist on the Sixth Circuit arose during the Clinton administration and before the change in majority last summer.