

expedited consideration by Congress for a domestic base closure round in 2007—after the completion of an overseas BRAC action.

The amendment is a recognition that the operation, sustainment, and recapitalization of unneeded overseas bases diverts scarce resources from the nation's defense capabilities and requires the Secretary of Defense to establish a management structure and initiate a process for eliminating excess physical capacity at overseas bases.

After conducting this review of overseas facilities, the Secretary would provide to Congress and the BRAC Commission a list of military installations, a detailing of the reassignments of troops and equipment from affected bases, and an estimate of the cost savings to be achieved. The Secretary would also be required to provide a certification whether a domestic round of BRAC would be necessary.

The BRAC Commission would then evaluate the Secretary's recommendations and provide an assessment of the extent that the Secretary accounted for the final report of the Commission on the Review of the Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States, whether the Secretary maximized the amount of savings and whether a domestic BRAC round in 2007 is warranted.

After the BRAC Commission completes its work, there is a process for an expedited consideration of an additional domestic BRAC. The amendment requires a "joint resolution" be introduced within 10 days after the President transmits to Congress an approval and certification for a domestic base closure round. If passed by Congress, then within 15 days, the Secretary will publish in the Federal Register the selection criteria to be used and a schedule for the BRAC round, and the domestic BRAC would proceed as originally planned.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the U.S. military has approximately 197,000 active-duty personnel stationed permanently outside the United States—that is 14 percent of our active duty military and 19 percent of the Army active-duty forces. And, while the Secretary of Defense has estimated an excess capacity of 29 percent in the Army domestic infrastructure, the Congressional Budget Office, in a May 2004 report on overseas basing has said:

Because of the various rounds of base realignment and closure (BRAC) that have occurred since the late 1980s, the Army has little excess capacity at its bases to absorb so many additional troops and units.

And according to former DoD Comptroller Dov Zakheim:

BRAC does . . . make it difficult to move our forces directly to where they ought to go if you don't want them to be overseas.

Most of these overseas troops are stationed in Germany and South Korea, where the United States currently maintains 330 bases at an estimated cost of \$1.2 billion annually. The ad-

ministration has raised a number of concerns about these forces, including the fact that Army forces in Germany may not be able to deploy quickly to conflicts in Africa or the Caspian Sea region of Central Asia. Additionally, many of the bases in South Korea, which were formerly isolated, are becoming increasingly surrounded by commercial and residential communities, leading to greater friction with the local communities and limiting the training that can be conducted.

The Congressional Budget Office has determined that removing the Army forces from Germany and South Korea and relocating them in the United States would not affect deployment times, make available 4,000 to 10,000 more troops for sustained overseas operations, and reduce family separation by 22 percent, improving troop morale and retention rates. These changes would also result in an estimated annual savings of \$1.2 billion. More important than financial considerations, today's uncertain environment requires our troops to be more agile and mobile and the time is long past to re-evaluate an overseas base structure that was developed to meet the threats of the Cold War.

Some people contend that the overseas basing decisions will be completed in time to be accounted for by the BRAC process. But the current legislation provides for the Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States to report on their findings to Congress no later than December 31, 2004—only 4½ months before the BRAC decisions are to be completed. This timeline does not allow the Department of Defense to fully account for these overseas facilities in their domestic BRAC analysis nor does it include any time to include any of the changes to the report that Congress may determine are necessary.

Significant changes are being considered for our overseas bases and forces and these decisions potentially have an enormous impact on our domestic base infrastructure. According to the Congressional Budget Office "the need to house forces in the United States that are now stationed overseas could preclude some" of the closures in the upcoming BRAC round.

I want to protect the military's critical readiness and operational assets. And I want to make absolutely sure that this nation maintains the military infrastructure it will require in the years to come to support the war on terror and protect our homeland. The amendment my colleagues and I have proposed today will ensure that the evaluation of military facilities by the Department of Defense, both overseas and within the United States, is conducted with rigor and in a deliberative, systematic manner. As Senator HUTCHISON correctly observed:

It would be irresponsible to build on an inefficient, obsolete overseas base structure, as we face new strategic threats in the 21st century, taking valuable dollars needed elsewhere.

Likewise, it would be irresponsible to continue with a domestic BRAC without a complete understanding and evaluation of our overseas basing requirements. This amendment will allow Congress time to exercise its oversight responsibilities and ensure that these important decisions—which cannot be undone—are serving the Nation's interests.

In closing, I believe that we must give the Department the time it needs to conduct a legitimate analysis of our security environment and the underpinning force structure and infrastructure requirements. Therefore I urge my colleagues to support the amendment before us.

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#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

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#### SUPPORT FOR U.S. TROOPS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, earlier today I heard a particularly egregious comment made on the Senate floor that I cannot in good conscience allow to pass unchallenged.

If there is one individual whose support for our troops and their effort I never thought would be subject to attack, it is JOHN MURTHA.

I served with Representative MURTHA in the House. I know full well the honorable service he has rendered to his country. And I know how hard he labors every day to promote the interests of our nation and its citizens—in particular our men and women in uniform.

JOHN joined the Marine Corps during the Korean War, and he later volunteered to serve in Vietnam. His public service continued back home when he became the first combat Vietnam veteran elected to Congress. JOHN has been awarded both the Navy Distinguished Service Medal and the USO's Spirit of Hope Award.

As most know, Representative MURTHA was a strong advocate for the Iraq war. And not too long ago, my Republican colleagues were praising him for his position. But now that he has raised reasonable questions about how the war has been handled by the Administration, he is being accused of aiding our enemies.

There should be no room in our debate for such personal attacks.

JOHN MCCAIN. Max Cleland. And now JOHN MURTHA. All of these men honorably served our country, and all have had their character impugned.

JOHN MURTHA is an honorable man with a long history of public service. No one should question his dedication to our troops and their families, and to the national interest.