

“The crews do not come to learn how to fly, but instead how to be the best combat aviators in the world.”

As we celebrate this historic occasion, we must never forget the importance of places like Nellis Air Force Base. I know many of my colleagues here in the U.S. Senate share my belief that America's ability to project its military might in the skies around the world is a direct result of the expert training programs at facilities like Nellis. Today we honor all of the men and women who have served proudly in the U.S. Air Force over the past 60 years. We owe them a tremendous amount of gratitude for their courageous sacrifices in defending the nation that we all work so hard to preserve.

APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the attached list of subcommittee assignments for the Committee on Appropriations be printed in the RECORD, to supplant the list printed in the RECORD on February 27, 2007.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SUBCOMMITTEES

Senator Byrd, as chairman of the Committee, and Senator Cochran, as ranking minority member of the Committee, are ex officio members of all subcommittees of which they are not regular members.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Kohl,¹ Harkin, Dorgan, Feinstein, Durbin, Johnson, Nelson, Reed, Bennett,² Cochran, Specter, Bond, McConnell, Craig, Brownback. (8-7)

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Mikulski,¹ Inouye, Leahy, Kohl, Harkin, Dorgan, Feinstein, Reed, Lautenberg, Shelby,² Gregg, Stevens, Domenici, McConnell, Hutchison, Brownback, Alexander. (9-8)

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Senators Inouye,¹ Byrd, Leahy, Harkin, Dorgan, Durbin, Feinstein, Mikulski, Kohl, Murray, Stevens,² Cochran, Specter, Domenici, Bond, McConnell, Shelby, Gregg, Hutchison. (10-9)

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT

Senators Dorgan,¹ Byrd, Murray, Feinstein, Johnson, Landrieu, Inouye, Reed, Lautenberg, Domenici,² Cochran, McConnell, Bennett, Craig, Bond, Hutchison, Allard. (9-8)

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Senators Durbin,¹ Murray, Landrieu, Lautenberg, Nelson, Brownback,² Bond, Shelby, Allard. (5-4)

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Senators Byrd,¹ Inouye, Leahy, Mikulski, Kohl, Murray, Landrieu, Lautenberg, Nelson, Cochran,² Gregg, Stevens, Specter, Domenici, Shelby, Craig, Alexander. (9-8)

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Feinstein,¹ Byrd, Leahy, Dorgan, Mikulski, Kohl, Johnson, Reed, Nelson, Allard,² Craig, Stevens, Cochran, Domenici, Bennett, Gregg, Alexander. (9-8)

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Harkin,¹ Inouye, Kohl, Murray, Landrieu, Durbin, Reed, Lautenberg, Specter,² Cochran, Gregg, Craig, Hutchison, Stevens, Shelby. (8-7)

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Senators Landrieu,¹ Durbin, Nelson, Alexander,² Allard. (3-2)

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Johnson,¹ Inouye, Landrieu, Byrd, Murray, Reed, Nelson, Hutchison,² Craig, Brownback, Allard, McConnell, Bennett. (7-6)

STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS

Senators Leahy,¹ Inouye, Harkin, Mikulski, Durbin, Johnson, Landrieu, Reed, Gregg,² McConnell, Specter, Bennett, Bond, Brownback, Alexander. (8-7)

TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Senators Murray,¹ Byrd, Mikulski, Kohl, Durbin, Dorgan, Leahy, Harkin, Feinstein, Johnson, Lautenberg, Bond,² Shelby, Specter, Bennett, Hutchison, Brownback, Stevens, Domenici, Alexander, Allard. (11-10)

¹ Subcommittee chairman.

² Ranking minority member.

SRI LANKA

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, it has been a little over a year since I last spoke in this Chamber about the fragile peace process in Sri Lanka. I want to take a moment to discuss the situation today because in the past year we have seen human rights in that small island nation steadily deteriorate. I also want to correct some confusion that may have occurred as a result of statements reported in the press regarding the Senate's action in connection with the fiscal year 2008 State, Foreign Operations appropriations bill. That bill passed the Senate by a vote of 81 to 12 on September 6, 2007, and we are waiting to begin conference discussions with the House of Representatives.

Over the years, I have been a strong supporter of U.S.-Sri Lankan relations. A good friend, Ambassador James Spain, served there, and the American people acted quickly to provide emergency assistance for Sri Lanka after the December 2004 tsunami devastated Sri Lanka's east, north, and southern coasts, claiming tens of thousands of lives. Beyond that, we have long supported the Sri Lankan Government's efforts to respond to acts of terrorism by the LTTE, which has been designated by the Department of State and the European Union as a foreign terrorist organization because of its attacks against civilians, assassinations of political leaders, forced recruitment of children, and other crimes.

We deplore these tactics. However, we are also aware that the LTTE has, at times, shown a willingness to participate in serious negotiations, as well as to respond to human rights concerns. These overtures should be pursued. We also recognize that the LTTE

should not be equated with the Tamil community. There are many ethnic Tamils living in and outside of Sri Lanka who do not condone acts of violence and terrorism against civilians. Many have been victims of the LTTE themselves.

At the same time, our aid to the Sri Lankan Government is not a blank check. We have been increasingly concerned with reports of abuses by Sri Lankan Government forces—not from the LTTE or their supporters as some have inaccurately claimed but from the United Nations, the Department of State, and international human rights organizations. These reports are not “disinformation” or “misinformation” as some Sri Lankan officials have alleged. Rather, they contain specific, documented, consistent information indicating a steady increase in serious human rights violations by both Sri Lankan Government forces and the LTTE since the collapse of the ceasefire. While the first acts of aggression were attributed to the LTTE, these reports also implicate Government forces in attacks on civilians, extrajudicial executions, torture, and forced disappearances. There is also evidence that Sri Lankan Government forces have stood by while allied paramilitary organizations have carried out abuses, including forcibly recruiting child soldiers. With few exceptions, the Sri Lankan Government has yet to bring the perpetrators, including members of Government security forces, to justice.

It is important to note that the Sri Lankan Government's respect for human rights and the rule of law has deteriorated even outside conflict-affected areas. The Millennium Challenge Corporation suspended more than \$11 million intended for Sri Lanka because of the deteriorating security situation and the Government's worsening performance on human rights. Freedom House, whose assessments of political rights and civil liberties are factored into the Millennium Challenge Corporation's analysis, stated “The serious human rights abuses and excessive restrictions on freedom of speech and association by the government of Sri Lanka merit the country's removal from a list of eligible recipients for U.S. Millennium Challenge Account assistance.” We want to see a Millennium Challenge compact for Sri Lanka, but these problems must first be recognized and effectively addressed.

An international human rights field presence, under the auspices of the United Nations, could do much to improve the situation. Given the gravity and scale of the violations witnessed in Sri Lanka, and particularly the inability of the Sri Lankan Government to monitor the abuses taking place in areas held by the LTTE, such a presence would help protect lives, document abuses by all sides, and support the Government and civil society in protecting the civilian population. The

Department of State has publicly endorsed such a role for the United Nations.

It is due to this information, from reputable sources, that the Senate attached three conditions to our assistance to the Sri Lankan military in the fiscal year 2008 State, Foreign Operations appropriations bill. Anyone who reviews those conditions should agree that they are reasonable and appropriate. They would require the Sri Lankan Government to be bringing to justice members of the military who have been credibly alleged to have committed gross violations of human rights; end unreasonable restrictions on access in the country by humanitarian organizations and journalists; and agree to the establishment of a field presence of the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sri Lanka.

It is regrettable that rather than explain why the Sri Lankan Government should not meet such reasonable standards when it is seeking millions of dollars in U.S. taxpayer assistance, some Sri Lankan officials have attacked our motives and falsely attributed our actions to LTTE propaganda. Others have insisted that they are meeting these standards already, when the facts clearly indicate that far more needs to be done.

We want Sri Lanka to succeed in stopping terrorism, and we recognize that military force can be necessary against terrorist tactics. But there is no military solution to the Sri Lankan conflict, which has dragged on for more than two decades. Thousands of innocent people—Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims—have been killed. More than 1,000 are reported to have “disappeared” in just the past 12 to 18 months, and many more before that. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced by the fighting. Families on both sides of the conflict have suffered terribly, and the country remains divided and no closer to peace.

Every time a Sri Lankan soldier violates international humanitarian law it alienates the very people in the Tamil community whose support the Government needs to combat terrorism. Our country has experienced a similar problem in Iraq, where killings of civilians have hurt our mission, tarnished our image and weakened the support of our allies.

I would hope that the Sri Lankan Government would see our action for what it is. We want to help, but not unconditionally. I believe the United States could and should play a more active role, with other key partners, in helping to facilitate negotiations on a political settlement. But rhetoric about human rights and the appointment of ineffectual commissions of inquiry that have no credibility, only goes so far. The situation remains grave and those responsible for abuses are rarely punished, making a peace agreement more difficult to achieve. A field presence of the Office of the High

Commissioner for Human Rights, with sufficient mandate and capability to conduct full and unfettered monitoring throughout the country, communicate its findings to all sides of the conflict and the public, and provide advice and technical assistance, is overdue. Also urgently needed is greater access for humanitarian organizations to assist civilians caught in the crossfire and for journalists to report the facts.

The Sri Lankan people have suffered the consequences of ethnic discrimination, violence, and injustice for the better part of their country's history. We cannot solve Sri Lanka's conflict; only the Sri Lankan people can. But we can and want to continue helping if the Government demonstrates that it takes our concerns seriously.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JACK SPALDING SCHRODER, JR.

• Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, today I honor in the RECORD of the Senate Jack Spalding Schroder, Jr. of Atlanta, who is a great Georgian and a great American. I honor Jack upon his retirement from Alston & Bird and for his work on behalf of the Georgia Hospital Association.

For nearly 32 years, Jack has served as lead legal counsel for the Georgia Hospital Association as an employee of Alston & Bird and its predecessor. He has served alongside three different association presidents, beginning with Seldon Brown in 1975, and he has authored numerous articles on hospitals and healthcare. He helped pave the way in the 1980s for public, not-for-profit hospitals to transfer leadership to not-for-profit governing boards that reduced political pressures and enhanced fundraising abilities. His efforts culminated in a major judicial victory at the Georgia Supreme Court.

Jack helped craft Georgia's first-ever Certificate of Need law, a law designed to control rising health care costs and preserve access to hospital services for all Georgians. In the past 10 years, while political pressures have forced other states to abandon Certificate of Need, Jack has been instrumental in helping Georgia preserve its successful Certificate of Need program.

Jack also helped shape important pieces of indigent care-related legislation that were designed to preserve access to care for hundreds of thousands of indigent patients while strengthening Georgia's local, community hospitals.

In addition to his role as lead legal counsel for the Georgia Hospital Association, Jack has served as president of the Georgia Academy of Health Care Attorneys as well as on the boards of a number of prominent health care law groups such as the Atlanta Bar Association and the American Health Lawyers Association.

Jack has served as a tireless advocate for enhancing Georgia hospitals'

ability to provide quality, cost-effective health care services to every Georgia resident. He and his wife Karen have earned the many happy years of retirement ahead of them.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure and it is a privilege to recognize on the floor of the U.S. Senate the contributions of Jack Schroder to the health care industry, to the Georgia Hospital Association and to the State of Georgia.●

RECOGNITION OF MOUNT MORIAH BAPTIST CHURCH

• Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Madam President, I wish to pay tribute to a historic church celebrating its 120th anniversary on November 10 to 11, 2007. Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Omaha, NE, was founded in 1887 and continues to thrive as it serves a vast congregation within the minority community living in Nebraska's largest city.

This anniversary is a significant achievement, especially for an institution born during a time of racial bigotry and hatred in America. The church's founding required the strength, courage, and faith of early African-American leaders, who recognized the importance of their mission to create a church which has now succeeded in delivering the Word of God to generations in three different centuries.

Mount Moriah Baptist Church has an interesting history. It was first organized in 1867, but due to the lack of a Black presence, membership declined. Then in 1887, the Reverend Amos Johnson organized a new baptist church with just seven members. A name was not immediately selected for the newly organized body. Finally, in 1888, the parishioners settled on Mount Pisgah Baptist Church. However, in 1897, the Enterprise newspaper reported the resignation of the Reverend R. January, who asked some of the church members to form a new congregation. The remaining members reorganized their congregation as the Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church.

Mount Moriah, whose name means “prepared for God,” has had to survive numerous challenges, including several changes in location and a fire which caused significant damage during the mid-1920s. In 1956, during the administration of Reverend St. Clair, who served for 20 years, the church underwent extensive renovations.

Today, 12 decades after it was formed, Mount Moriah Baptist Church remains a focal point in Omaha, NE, just as its namesake, Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, has always been a focal point in biblical history.

I wish to commend Rev. Ralph B. Lassiter, Sr., and the congregation of Mount Moriah Baptist Church of Omaha, NE, for continuing the long and glorious tradition of teaching the Bible and its meaning and training the faithful how to live its message. Your service is truly admirable.●