Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Young (AK)
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—18

Bishop (UT)
Brown, Corrine
Carter
Castor
Crenshaw
Feeney
Fossella
Gillibrand
Green, Gene
Kennedy
LaTourette
Rangel
Rush
Tiahrt
Walden (OR)
Wexler
Wynn
Yarmuth

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are reminded there are less than 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1909

Mr. SIMPSON changed his vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend remarks on general debate concerning H.R. 5658.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

DUNCAN HUNTER NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1213 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 5658.

□ 1910

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 5658) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2009 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2009, and for other purposes, with Mr. JACKSON of Illinois in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) each will control 1 hour.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, today the House begins consideration of H.R. 5658, which is the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.

This bill is a collective effort in the bipartisan tradition of the House Armed Services Committee which approved the bill in markup by a vote of 61–0. It is an excellent bill.

I want to thank the members of our Armed Services Committee, particularly the subcommittee chairmen, the ranking members, and actually every member of the committee.

Let me take this opportunity to also, Mr. Chairman, recognize the ranking member and former chairman, DUNCAN HUNTER, for once again being a great partner on this bill, and he is certainly to be commended and thanked for it. I am proud that DUNCAN and I have worked so well together through the years and always with the common goal of enhancing American national security.

It is only fitting, Mr. Chairman, that as DUNCAN HUNTER plans to retire at the end of this Congress, our committee colleagues unanimously voted to name this bill in his honor, recognizing DUNCAN HUNTER's many years of service on the Armed Services Committee, and also recognizing his unfailing support of our men and women in uniform. And we thank him publicly for that.

Mr. Chairman, let me discuss some significant provisions of the bill. It reflects our committee's view that restoring military readiness must be our number one priority. This is serious business. If, after more than 6 years of war, our effort is to restore military readiness, then it must be sustained in order to meet not just current military challenges, which are monumental, but prepare for the unexpected conflicts we may face in the future.

We don't know what is around the corner. I might point out, in the last 31 years American military forces have been engaged in no less than 12 military conflicts, four of which have been major in size.

The bill directs approximately $2 billion toward unfunded readiness initiatives requested by the services. It includes $932 million to deal with equipment shortages as well as for equipment maintenance. The bill also provides for some $800 million for National Guard and Reserve equipment, and $650 million to keep defense facilities in good working order and to address urgent issues such as dilapidated military barracks.

□ 1915

To boost readiness and to reduce the strain on our forces, the bill increases the size of our military; 7,000 additional Army troops, 5,000 additional marines, and prevents further military to civilian conversions in the medical field by authorizing an additional 1,023 Navy sailors and 450 additional Air Force personnel.

The bill also maintains our efforts to support and honor the men and women who serve our Nation in uniform and their families, providing a much needed 3.9 percent pay raise increase, and again, prohibiting increases in health care fees, among a range of other initiatives.

I might point out, the administration recommended only a 3.4 percent pay raise, and we raised that, as we should have.

The authorization bill also keeps our focus on Afghanistan, which is the primary front in the war on terror. The bill requires the administration to submit separate budget requests to clearly lay out the requirements for the war in Afghanistan, and on the other hand, the war in Iraq. It requires a system be set up to measure the success of the U.S.-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and requires more robust congressional reporting on the training of the Afghan Security Force.

Finally, the bill requires the Department of Defense to address the issue of command and control for forces in Afghanistan operating under Operation Enduring Freedom, as well as the NATO International Security Assistance Force.

The bill authorizes a $70 billion bridge for the fights in Iraq and Afghanistan. But we remain convinced that it's well past time for the Iraqis to step up and contribute more substantially to their very own security, as well as their prosperity. With the Iraqis' overwhelming budget and capital account surpluses, the bill requires Iraqis to invest more in their own reconstruction, as well as their own security efforts.

The bill also includes steps toward contracting reform after the substantial improvements in the law which we enacted in our previous bill last year.

This bill underlines our commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It adds $31 million for the Cooperative Threat Reduction programs of the Department of Defense, and some $215 million from the Department of Energy's nonproliferation programs. That's important.

Finally, I want to say a word about the need for reforms in the way our government coordinates and executes its national security policy. Many here in Congress as well as the executive branch are working to improve our interagency system. It's a massive effort that cannot be accomplished in any one single year.

I remember well the now famous Goldwater-Nichols Act. It was an effort over 4 years in the Congress of the United States which, of course, made jointness part of the military culture, and this may well be along the same line, although hopefully it will not take 4 years to accomplish. But it cannot be done in one single year.

At the appropriate time during the bill's consideration, I will offer an amendment along with Chairman HOWARD BERMAN of the Foreign Affairs

Committee and Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman NITA LOWEY to establish a standing advisory board to work with the Secretaries of State and Defense on interagency matters and report to Congress their recommendations.

Before I reserve the balance of my time, let me pay tribute to those Members who plan to leave Congress at the end of this session and for whom this will be their final defense authorization bill. In addition to the retirement of our friend and ranking member, DUNCAN HUNTER, I want to express my appreciation to two other senior Members who plan to retire, Congressman JIM SAXTON and Congressman TERRY EVERETT. Both these gentlemen have made a very important contribution to our committee through the years and, consequently, have been wonderful partners, as well as outstanding Americans.

In addition, two of the most capable and committed members of our committee, ROB ANDREWS and MARK UDALL, plan to leave in order to seek other offices. The House and our committee are all the better for their service, and we wish all of these members who are not going to return to our committee next year all the best. They will be missed.

This is a critical time in our Nation. This defense bill is a very important one. I urge Members of this House to support this defense authorization bill. It does so much in the area of readiness, to support our men and women in uniform and their families, and to protect the American people.

With that, and additional thanks to my friend, DUNCAN HUNTER, on his final bill, we appreciate your work, your efforts, your friendship, Mr. HUNTER.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. To my great friend, I don't deserve this honor that he has recommended here of naming the bill. I'm just an ordinary American, but I get to serve with lots of extraordinary Americans, and the gentleman from Missouri is one of those extraordinary Americans. He talked about the jointness that he's trying to bring over from his great work on the Goldwater-Nichols bill, of bringing our services together to act jointly, and extend that to the other agencies which are so crucial in this operation in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to bring them in also in a way that they act as a member of the team led, most of the time, by the Department of Defense, but nonetheless, one that requires cohesion and jointness and a culture of working together as a team.

I want to commend the gentleman for the fact that he has been the corporate historian, if you will, for the House of Representatives and for the Armed Services Committee, who often brings us back in debate or in hearings to events that transpired in conflicts 100 years ago sometimes, or World War II or Korea or Vietnam, and reminds us that we shouldn't have to learn the lesson a second time. So I want to give my great thanks to this great American, IKE SKELTON, and to all of the members of the great Armed Services Committee and the chairmen and ranking members of the subcommittees who put together such a great bill. A couple of them are sitting here next to me. I know JIM SAXTON is leaving. He was the first chairman of the Special Operations Subcommittee, the Terrorism Subcommittee, and traveled the world and the country and every base where we had SOCOM people stationed, talking to the teams, talking, whether they were Green Berets or Rangers or SEALs or other operators, trying to understand what they needed from Congress in order to be effective. He worked to get them that equipment, and now, as the ranking member of Air, Land, he continues that mission.

And, of course, TERRY EVERETT, that guy who doesn't make long speeches but spends a lot of time in classified sessions working and understanding on the issues surrounding space, and how those issues relate to national security. Probably nobody else in the country knows as much as he does on those issues.

And, of course, we've got a couple of members, as the chairman said, moving on to other offices, ROB ANDREWS and MARK UDALL, and we wish them the very best.

Mr. Chairman, this is an excellent defense bill, and I concur with the gentleman from Missouri that we should have a unanimous vote in the House of Representatives, just as we had under his leadership in the Armed Services Committee.

It does a couple of things that are important for us. It works toward the warfighting theaters, which are very important, Iraq, Afghanistan and other places in the world where the global war on terror is taking place. But, at the same time, and in those, in that category, we put in extra money for MRAPs for these armored vehicles, for protection for our troops, for jammers, for all the things, for new surveillance capability, new anti-mortar capability, all the things that would go to force protection, and also make our troops more effective in those theaters.

But beyond that, we pay a lot of attention and put a great deal of focus on modernizing the military and looking over the horizon to challenges that may go far beyond the current theaters.

We continue to fund the F–22, which the reports now coming back from the operators are to the effect that the F–22 is doing extremely well, a high performance fighter aircraft with lots of capability, lots of legs, lots of firepower, but especially lots of sensor capability, which we're finding to be extremely valuable.

The V–22, which is this platform that the Marines wanted for years because it goes roughly twice as fast as the CH–46s that it's replacing, are working extremely well in theater. The Marines are getting from point A to point B in half the time. They're able to carry out their mission more efficiently and effectively. They like that particular platform. And across the board, we are replacing and modernizing our military equipment.

Now there are some things that we need to do in this bill, and I would hope we could do on the floor. We did cut some $300 million out of missile defense. Mr. Chairman, we live in an era of missiles. This is an era in which we will see, in the coming years, the Iranians continuing to improve on the Shahab missile classes, which already can reach parts of Europe, at some point will be able to reach all of Europe, and will be followed by missile classes that, at some point, will be able to reach the United States.

We also have seen North Korea throw a pod of missiles into the North China Sea, and the Sea of Japan; some of which have capability, if they put more sections on those missiles, ultimately, to reach American allies and the United States itself. So we're entering the middle of what I would call the era of missiles. And having defense against missiles is a key part of the American defense system.

We've had these wonderful successes where we've shot down missiles that are traveling, where the interceptor and the missile it shoots down 148 miles above the surface of the Earth are traveling roughly three times the speed of a 30–06 bullet, and we've had collisions in mid flight. We saw a great demonstration when we took down the rogue satellite that had to be destroyed to avoid possible collateral damage. We took that down with a sea-based missile system that worked very well.

We clearly are moving along in the right direction in trying to put up defenses as the offensive systems become more sophisticated. But I think we need to continue to move down that path.

We did cut money out of the European-based missile systems and other systems, and I would hope that we could restore some of the missile defense money in this particular bill. I know Mr. FRANKS will be offering that.

Similarly, the FCS program, I think, is an area we need to restore dollars. Mr. Chairman, we have a number of en bloc amendments and amendments that will be offered by members that I think will, in fact, make this bill even a little bit better than it is.

I want to finish by thanking the chairman for putting together a great bill in the Armed Services Committee, for moving it down the road very quickly, and getting it to the House floor.

This is the bill that provides our troops with the tools that they need to get the job done. And that's why it's important, that's why this committee acts in such a bipartisan fashion, and we follow the bipartisan model of the gentleman from Missouri, IKE SKELTON.

I would reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to my friend, my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER) who also is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in very strong support of H.R. 5658, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.

I want to commend Chairman SKELTON for his leadership on bringing such a strong bipartisan bill to the floor.

As chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, I have worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure that the bill achieves three broad objectives. It sustains and modernizes the stockpile stewardship program, which insures the safety, security and reliability of our nuclear deterrent. It invests in the development and deployment of ballistic missile defense systems that address near term threats to the United States, our deployed troops and our allies. And it supports significant military space programs in critical phases of development, including the space-based infrared system.

□ 1930

With regard to the nuclear complex, it provides additional funding to address certification issues raised by the 2007 JASON review of the RRW proposal. It fully executes the National Ignition Campaign, and it explores next-generation stockpile stewardship tools. The bill fully funds the request for the defense environmental cleanup and urges DOE to increase the resources dedicated to cleanup in future budgets.

We also fully fund the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, and we stress that the MOX project is a nonproliferation and a national security priority.

For the Missile Defense Agency, the bill authorizes $8.6 billion, a cut of $719 million below the administration's request. The bill reflects our committee's strong bipartisan support for addressing the short, medium, and intermediate missile threats that face our warfighters. It includes several important funding increases. It adds $75 million for Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense, $75 million for Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, $25 million for missile defense target development, and $10 million for the joint U.S.-Israel short-range missile defense program.

The bill authorizes $341 million for the proposed European missile defense site, an increase of more than $100 million over current-year funding but a reduction of $371 million below the administration's request.

The committee has extended conditions contained in the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act to help ensure that the pace of any deployment of U.S. missile defense systems in Europe is synchronized with our diplomatic efforts and that the proposed system has been fully tested.

The bill strongly supports our cooperative programs with Israel authorizing $54.1 million for the joint U.S.-Israel short-range missile defense program, an increase of $10 million over the President's request.

It also authorizes $74.3 million for continued development of the Arrow Weapons System.

In military space programs, the bill pushes DOD to focus on near-term warfighter needs, space situational awareness, and space protection. The bill also directs the Secretary of Defense to submit a plan for the Department's bandwidth needs in the near and longer term.

Mr. Chairman, at this time I would like to honor my ranking member, Mr. EVERETT of Alabama, who is retiring this year. Mr. EVERETT was previously the chairman of this subcommittee. There is no finer gentleman in the House. He is a man of significant effort, he is a perfect Southern gentleman, and it was my pleasure to work with him over the last few years and this year to have him as my ranking member. I wish him and his wife Barbara and their family all the best in their retirement years.

Mr. Chairman, the bill supports our critical national security priorities, and I strongly urge my colleagues to support its adoption today.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the gentlelady in putting this bill together and recognize the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) who, every time I talked to him over the last 4 or 5 years, he was meeting with a different group of special operators trying to figure out what they needed and where they needed to go and tireless in pouring himself into an airplane to get to yet another base and meet with more troops.

He's done a wonderful job as the ranking member of the Air and Land Subcommittee. We're going to miss the gentleman from New Jersey.

I would like to yield him 5 minutes.

Mr. SAXTON. I want to thank Mr. HUNTER for yielding time.

Mr. Chairman, there has been a lot said here tonight about bipartisanship and working together, and it's absolutely been a fantastic experience for the last 2 years we've worked under the leadership of our good friend, IKE SKELTON. I might say that one of the reasons that this bipartisanship works so well is very simply because we're all friends. We're friends in the committee, we're friends in the hallway, we're friends in our offices, and we are friends here on the floor, and we're friends when we're not in session.

And so we appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight on the floor in that spirit.

I might also thank my good friend from California (Mr. HUNTER) for the kind remarks that he offered with regard to my service. But I want to say something, too, about Mr. HUNTER, because for the last several years before IKE SKELTON, Mr. HUNTER was our chairman, and now he's our ranking member. Following in the footsteps of Floyd Spence and Bob Stump, DUNCAN HUNTER picked up the job of being chairman and continued to set the tone for the bipartisanship that is a hallmark of the Armed Services Committee.

Perhaps as only Ronald Reagan could have said it years ago when I first came to Congress, he said, You know, a lot of things are important around here, but there is nothing that's more important, maybe there are some things that are as important, but nothing is more important than our national security.

And the bipartisanship with which the Armed Services Committee, under the leadership of both Mr. SKELTON and Mr. HUNTER and their predecessors, has approached this issue is very, very important. I would like to thank the gentleman for the great job that he's done, as well as my friend, IKE SKELTON.

Force protection is a very important element of this bill. We know that force protection has changed a great deal because of the threat that we face in Iraq and Afghanistan of an conventional nature.

In this bill we upgraded the funding available for the Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected Vehicle, the MRAP. We have $947 million to upgrade the armor on Humvees, and $2.2 million for the Abrams tank upgrades, the Bradley fighting vehicle, as well as the Stryker. And so we once again put our soldiers first and are providing the protection for them that they need.

One of my pet projects in the years that I have been on the committee has been the moving forward of the C–17, and here again, we've got funding or we've got authorization here for 15 additional C–17s, and hopefully we will continue to move forward with that.

There is one area that I have a concern about in this bill, but it's a whole lot better than it could have been when it started. Our great friend, NEIL ABERCROMBIE, compromised with us on the Future Combat System.

While it's important to provide force protection for today's Army, it's also important to get ready for tomorrow's Army. And while the Air Force, as well as the Marine Corps, as Mr. HUNTER pointed out, adopted a revolutionary system known as the V–22, which is a fixed-wing aircraft. It can take off vertically and can fly twice as fast as a helicopter. That was revolutionary. In the Air Force, we have revolutionary systems, the F–22, the Joint Strike Fighter, which are revolutionary because they can do things that we never dreamed that we could do before.

The Army has been an evolutionary developer, and the FCS, the Future Combat System, is the first, in my time here, revolutionary system adopted by the Army. We cut the funding for the Future Combat System by $233 million. I think that's a mistake. This is a big year for the FCS, and in my view, we should have funded it altogether. $3.6 billion is a lot of money. That's the total authorization for the FCS this

year. A 5 or 10 percent cut may not seem much, but this is the make-it-or-break-it year. This is the year we study the progress we've made with FCS and decide whether to go forward with it or not. A bad year to make a cut in my estimation.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate very much the opportunity to be here tonight under these circumstances. This is a good bill. I am certainly going to support it, and as Mr. HUNTER suggested, this should be a unanimous vote, and I urge the House to make it so.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, at this time I yield 5 minutes to the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, the gentlelady, our friend and colleague, Mrs. DAVIS.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Chairman, as the chairwoman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, I'm pleased to support H.R. 5658, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.

As my colleagues and the other subcommittee Chairs have noted and will note, I think, as they speak, this bill is a bipartisan effort. I want to recognize the committee chair, of course, Mr. IKE SKELTON, and the ranking member, Mr. DUNCAN HUNTER, for their exemplary leadership.

I would also like to recognize my ranking member on the subcommittee, Mr. MCHUGH, for his support. I also want to thank our dedicated staffs on both sides of the aisle for extraordinary work.

Each year has been extremely challenging to meet all of the wishes that we seek for those who are serving in harm's way. And this year was certainly no exception. However, the defense bill before us continues to enhance and improve the quality of life for our servicemembers and their families who are bearing the brunt of 6 years of war.

Let me highlight some of the important initiatives that we address. The committee supported the President's proposal to increase end strength for the Army and Marine Corps and restores the military to civilian conversions within the medical community that were prohibited in last year's bill.

The bill includes a 3.9 percent pay raise which is one-half of 1 percent above both the President's budget request and private sector raises as measured by the Employment Cost Index, the ECI. This is the 10th consecutive year of pay raises above ECI, and this raise will further reduce the gap between military and private sector raises from 3.4 percent to 2.9 percent from a high of 13.5 percent during fiscal year 1999.

The bill establishes a tuition-assistance program for eligible military spouses to develop careers that are portable as they move with their servicemember from base to base.

The bill also authorizes a career intermission pilot program that would allow those who are seeking a military career time-off from active duty for a period of several years in order to pursue other life achievements.

The reserve components have moved from a strategic force to an integral and vital part of the operational force, particularly in the Army. The bill would increase full-time manning for the Army National Guard to 30,450 and the Army Reserve to 17,070.

The bill prohibits TRICARE health and pharmacy fee increases proposed in the President's budget. I'm pleased that we were successful in finding the offsets necessary to prohibit the fee increases to protect our military beneficiaries.

However, the committee remains concerned that the department continues to put forward proposals that place the focus solely on our military retirees and fails to address other cost drivers within the system. So we must work together to find a fair and equitable solution that protects our beneficiaries and ensures the financial viability of the military health care system for the future. The bill begins efforts to improve the health care readiness of our force and their families by establishing preventive health care programs.

Mr. Chairman, the bill before the Members today is a good bill, and Members can be proud of what we are doing for the troops and their families.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland who is the ranking member on the Seapower and Expeditionary Forces subcommittee, Mr. BARTLETT.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Chairman, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. As ranking member of the Seapower and Expeditionary Forces Subcommittee, I applaud the efforts of Chairman TAYLOR and his staff who have done an excellent job of meeting the needs of our sailors, aviators and marines.

I also want to thank my staff who did a great job. They helped prepare this statement and so they modestly did not include themselves. Thank you, staff, very much.

The bill accelerates the planned refueling complex overhaul of the USS *Theodore Roosevelt*. It fully funds the next generation carrier, the fiscal year 2009 Virginia class submarine and provides procurement for a second Virginia class submarine in both fiscal years 2010 and 2011. The bill also authorizes two T-AKEs and two Littoral combat ships.

There are several areas where the committee disagreed with the President's budget requests. For example, the bill would not allow the Navy to terminate the LPD–17 production line. The bill would slow the pace of the DDG 1000 destroyer program while providing the Navy with the flexibility to reevaluate its options for service combatants and reduce risk for the next generation cruiser.

On the aviation side, the bill continues to support the alternative engine for the Joint Strike Fighter. It also provides additional funding to address emergent P–3 aircraft repair issues.

□ 1945

With regard to Marine Corps programs, the chairman and I share concerns and the same goals about the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle and its survivability. The Marine Corps has responded to our concerns by making design changes that will improve its survivability by 50 percent over the baseline. But I believe that more can be done. I have asked the chairman if we can continue to examine this bill's proposed $40 million cut to the EFV program to ensure we achieve this important goal.

The bill extends the committee's prior work to expand nuclear propulsion for shipbuilding. Last year, we required the Navy to include integrated nuclear propulsion for the next generation cruiser. This year, the bill would require that future amphibious assault vessels also include nuclear power.

The Navy's 2007 study on alternative energy for ship propulsion indicated that the break-even price for nuclear propulsion for amphibious ships was a market price of $178 per barrel of oil. We're creeping up to that number. Oil hit a new record of $133 a barrel today.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to note that several of our colleagues, all three of them sitting in the Chamber in front of me, are retiring at the end of this Congress. My very good friend, DUNCAN HUNTER; good friend, JIM SAXTON; and my classmate, TERRY EVERETT, thank you all very much for what you have done for your country, for our servicemen and -women. You have my deepest respect and gratitude.

Mr. Chairman, I ask my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Washington, who is also the chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism and Conventional Threats and Capabilities, Mr. SMITH.

(Mr. SMITH of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to start by thanking Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER for the work they have done, not just on this bill but during the 12 years that I've been in Congress and even before then.

Their leadership on this committee I think should be an inspiration to all of us in the way they approach these very important issues. To begin with, they set a tone of bipartisanship. We worked together in an open process that I think gives us the high quality product

that we wind up with. And that's not to say that we don't disagree, occasionally along party lines, but we do so in a very open, very honest way, in a way that I think addresses the issues and the way that Congress should perform. I want to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER for his time as ranking member and time as chairman as well for doing that.

I think this year's bill is a particularly good product and representative of that fine work. We have heard many different pieces of it already. I just want to highlight two in the general bill.

First of all, the $2 billion in additional money that we put in to deal with readiness, a major challenge right now for our Armed Forces, particularly the Army and the Marines. Our forces are really under a great deal of strain because of their deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Maintaining readiness has been a major challenge and concern, and this bill puts that concern up front and funds it in a way that will help us begin to deal with the problem.

Also, equally as importantly, it prioritizes our troops by giving them a 3.9 percent pay raise, to recognize the hard work and sacrifice that they perform for us and support them in every way that we possibly can.

With that, I want to highlight some of what we've done on our subcommittee, the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities. We have four main areas that we focus on.

The first of those is the Special Operations Command over which we have jurisdiction, and I want to pause at this moment in the general remarks and thank Representative SAXTON who, though he is not the ranking member on this committee now, serves on the committee and was the first Chair. As Representative HUNTER has pointed out, the special operations forces were a particular concern of Representative SAXTON. He has a done a great deal in our efforts to expand that force, meet their needs and expand their capabilities, and more than that, he has been a great Member, not just of this subcommittee but of this committee for his career in Congress. He will be missed, and I very much appreciated working with him.

What we have done primarily for special operations forces in the bill this year is fund as many of their unfunded requirements as we possibly can. They have been at an incredibly rapid tempo in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. Continuing to fund their needs is the top priority of our subcommittee.

The other area that we focus on is irregular warfare, and there are a number of different pieces to this. But I think it's a critical part of our defense bill because it is emerging as one of the most continuous pieces of the fight, counterinsurgency efforts, counterterrorism efforts, things that were not prior to 9/11 part of our lexicon to the degree that they are now.

We take steps to make that a higher priority by raising it to the Assistant Secretary level at the DOD and also by helping to fund human terrain teams. Our subcommittee received excellent testimony about what these human terrain teams are doing to go in and understand the culture in Afghanistan, in Iraq. We actually employ anthropologists and others who are experts in culture so that our forces can know who they're dealing with when they go in. This is a critical element of what we're working on.

We also, thirdly, focus on harnessing technological innovation. We fund it, to begin with, $1.69 billion worth of R&D for science and technology, and we also focus on harnessing new technologies as quickly as possible by developing a clearinghouse for that. The procurement process in the DOD can be a lengthy process at times. We want to get these technologies out in the field as quickly as possible when they are most useful.

We're also asking the Department to focus on the recruitment of IT professionals, the people with the brains to help us with cyber security and elsewhere. As you might guess, the DOD does not pay as much as these people might be able to earn in the private sector. So we have to aggressively go out there and recruit folks to make sure that we have the top IT professionals within the DOD. Our bill focuses on that as well.

Lastly, we focus on improving DOD's homeland defense capabilities, a role of our subcommittee, by funding the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the chemical/biological defense programs and by increasing their funds and making sure that they have what is necessary to protect us here in the homeland, within the DOD, working in cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security.

Again, I want to thank Representative SAXTON for his work and also Representative THORNBERRY, who is the ranking member on this subcommittee. He has been great to work with, very smart, very talented, works in a bipartisan way. All of the issues that I have just listed have been made possible in large part because of his input. I appreciate working with him as well.

Again, I want to thank the chairman and Ranking Member HUNTER for the way they run this committee. It makes me proud to be in Congress every year I have the opportunity to serve with them.

Thank you very much.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentleman who just spoke for his great work on this bill, and I yield for 4 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama, who is the ranking member on the Strategic Subcommittee, formerly the chairman, and again a guy who has spent thousands of hours in closed-door sessions, with no press releases attached and no cameras present. He's a guy that's pretty easy to elbow out of the way at a press conference because he usually isn't there. But he has served countless hours in the service of this country, understanding some pretty complex things about space and national security, and he is the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. TERRY EVERETT, and the country needs more people like this gentleman.

Mr. EVERETT. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'd like to thank my good friend, Mr. HUNTER, for yielding to me and thank him for his leadership and his friendship.

I was honored that when this subcommittee was originally formed, Mr. HUNTER asked me to be the first chairman of this subcommittee. It was a great pleasure and it's been a real love for me.

I would also say that Mr. HUNTER has served this Nation and his constituents in California with great distinction. He's served this Nation with great distinction.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 5658, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.

I would also like to congratulate Strategic Forces Subcommittee Chairman TAUSCHER. This subcommittee handles some very technical, complex and sometimes controversial issues. Missile defense, space, and nuclear weapons are difficult issues to work through. But together, with the understanding and leadership of Chairman TAUSCHER, we have developed legislation where we agree on far more than we disagree.

This year's bill contains many sound measures that provide key capabilities to the warfighter and strengthen our strategic forces.

I am particularly pleased with the support this bill provides to national security space. The bill addresses many important issues including: continued awareness of the growing threat to space and emphasis on mitigating vulnerabilities; the need to war-game and exercise the loss of space capabilities; full funding for key acquisition programs such as advanced extremely high frequency, WGS, SBIRS and GPS–3, that reflect a measured approach to space acquisition; and protection of the T–SAT budget request, while the Department reevaluates architecture options after their decision to reduce this program by $4 billion.

The mark makes positive strides in the area of atomic energy defense activities by: adding funding to research enhanced surety for existing weapons systems; and directing the Secretaries of Defense and Energy to report on steps they are taking to enhance inventory controls for nuclear weapons.

I am disappointed the Reliable Replacement Warhead study wasn't directly funded. Our nuclear deterrent is aging, while the rest of the world's nuclear powers are modernizing theirs. The commander of U.S. Strategic Command testified that we are accepting significant future risks with our legacy Cold War stockpile.

The American public may not realize this, but the current administration has implemented the largest nuclear stockpile reductions since the end of the Cold War and has an extensive nonproliferation program to reflect the evolving proliferation threat.

A reliable, modernized nuclear stockpile that includes RRW holds the promise of allowing us to further lower our nuclear weapons numbers, while continuing to provide a strong deterrent for the United States and our allies.

Our missile defense deliberations proved the most challenging. While we agreed on many provisions, such as full support for Patriot PAC–3, Aegis and THAAD, there are a few provisions that the minority could not concur with.

I am deeply concerned about the 50 percent cut to European missile defense contained in the bill. I believe this sends the wrong signal to our allies and emboldens Iran.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. HUNTER. I yield the gentleman another minute.

Mr. EVERETT. While Congress puts the brakes on this effort to protect the American people, our forward-deployed forces, and our allies, Iran has stepped on the accelerator. Iran continues to: expand its arsenal of short- and longer-range ballistic missiles, install advanced centrifuges to enrich uranium, and evade questions on past nuclear weapons research.

Our NATO allies recognize this threat and, in April 2008, provided unanimous endorsement of the European missile defense proposal. In a few weeks, the Czech Republic plans to sign agreements with the U.S. to host the missile tracking radar.

This is a critical time for the U.S. to continue its leadership. In addition to NATO, we have key allies such as Israel and Japan who are relying on U.S. commitments to missile defense. I am, therefore, disappointed that the committee would not accept my amendment to restore funding to this effort, particularly after significant progress is being made to meet the conditions outlined in last year's legislation.

As the Secretary General of NATO said at a speech on May 5, ''In tomorrow's uncertain world, we cannot wait for threats to mature before deciding how to counter them.''

I also remain concerned about China's actions in space. According to the Pentagon's annual China military report, its undeclared and unexplained January 2007 anti-satellite test is only one part of a larger Chinese counterspace program to prevent the use of space. Thus, I was strongly disappointed and troubled that my amendment to direct an independent study to examine the feasibility of space-based defense concepts was not supported in our committee markup. Such a system might also provide another layer of defense against ballistic missile threats.

In the final analysis, there is far more in this bill that we agree on than disagree on.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has again expired.

Mr. HUNTER. I yield the gentleman an additional minute.

Mr. EVERETT. I would, however, caution Members from further reducing funding for missile defense. These programs have already been cut by over $700 million. Any further reductions to these important programs would have very detrimental effects to our national defense.

I think the programs in our subcommittee's jurisdiction are some of the most exciting things our Nation does. It is important that we not lose sight of the vital role our space, missile defense, and nuclear deterrent capabilities play in our national security.

I would like to thank the other members of the subcommittee and the staff for their hard work in making this bill a quality product. I intend to support it, and I ask the Members to support it.

Again, I would like to congratulate Chairman TAUSCHER for the work that she's done on making this a very good mark, and also I'd like to congratulate my good friend IKE SKELTON for his leadership.

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Mr. SKELTON. At this time, I yield 5 minutes to my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), who is also the chairman of the Subcommittee on Seapower and Expeditionary Forces.

Mr. TAYLOR. I want to thank the distinguished chairman, and quite possibly the best committee chairman we've had on the House Armed Services Committee in my 20 years, Chairman IKE SKELTON.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 5658, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2009. The bill before the House today represents the strong bipartisan effort of the House Armed Services Committee under the leadership of our very capable chairman, IKE SKELTON.

For Navy and Marine Corps programs, this bill recommends several initiatives not in the administration's budget request that we believe will enhance the ability of the sea services to protect our Nation. These initiatives include:

Full funding for the eight ships in the President's request, with authorization to build an additional four.

The funds for $1.8 billion to fully fund a 10th LPD class amphibious assault ship, a vessel that is the number one priority of the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

We would pause the DDG 1000 program to allow the Chief of Naval Operations the flexibility to restore the production of the DDG–51 class destroyers, or continue the 1000 program.

Advanced procurement funding for long lead components to accelerate the production of Virginia class submarines to two per year beginning in fiscal year 2010 instead of fiscal year 2011.

Authorization for the final two vessels in the Lewis and Clark T–AKE dry cargo ammunition ship class.

$14.6 billion for the procurement of 206 aircraft, including eight Joint Strike Fighters, 45 F/A–18 series aircraft, 30 Marine Corps MV–22s, 49 MH–60 series helicopters, 44 T–6 JPATS training aircraft, and two KC 130J cargo aircraft.

We would include $247 million for the continued funding of the Joint Strike Fighter competitive engine program; $448 million for emergent aircraft wing repairs to the P–3C fleet of reconnaissance aircraft.

We also include important legislative proposals that would direct the Secretary of the Navy to design and construct the next class of amphibious warships with an integrated nuclear power system.

Mr. Chairman, today the price of oil went to approximately $130 a barrel. Less than half of the oil that our Nation uses is produced within the United States of America. It makes no sense at all, you have aircraft carriers that could go 30 years without refueling, if those ships that support our aircraft carriers have to refuel every 3 to 5 days.

We would authorize the commencement of the complex refueling overhaul of the USS Roosevelt. We would authorize economic inflation adjustments to the statutory cost cap of the Littoral combat ship based on the realities of cost escalations in the materials to build those ships.

We would require accountability of obligations in the National Defense Sealift Fund. I want to thank one of our new Members, Admiral Sestak, for helping to make that happen.

For the committee's oversight of the activities of the Maritime Administration of the Department of Transportation, we authorize the request for funding the Maritime Security Program, the Vessel Disposal Program, and the operations and maintenance included in the Merchant Marine Academy.

We would authorize $30 million for the Maritime Guaranteed Loan Program, commonly referred to as title XI loans. We would authorize the Secretary of Transportation to increase student initiative payments at the various State maritime academies.

And we would prohibit the transfer of government-owned vessels for the purpose of scrapping or dismantling in foreign shipyards.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to thank my good friend and ranking member, the gentleman from Maryland, the Honorable ROSCOE BARTLETT. I have been honored to have him as my working business partner. He has been a great partner in helping to rebuild our Nation's fleet.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' in support of this bill.

I now recognize the gentleman from Maine for the purpose of a colloquy.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss an important subject, the fine men and women of Bath Iron Works, one of two shipyards in my district.

These skilled men and women are a national asset and the reason for our proud slogan that ''Bath built is best built.'' It is on their behalf I would like to ask the gentleman about the committee mark for the DDG 1000 program.

Mr. TAYLOR. I appreciate the gentleman's questions. I would remind the gentleman, and all Members of this body, that from the earlier days of our Republic we have had at least six major naval shipyards. In the early days, there was concern that maybe the British or the French may come back and reoccupy our country. In the case of the Washington Navy Yard, they did. It made sense then, it made sense now.

I am committed to the industrial base of those yards that build our surface combatants, both in Maine and on the gulf coast. The DDG–51 has been a phenomenal platform.

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Mr. ELLISON). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 2 additional minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi.

Mr. TAYLOR. The 51 has been a proven platform; we've had over 50 of those ships constructed. It has turned out to be a bargain for the taxpayer.

I do have concerns about the DDG 1000 program and some possible cost overruns associated with it. That is why for the stability of the fleet and for the purposes of trying to get the fleet up to 313 ships, we are going to give the Chief of Naval Operations the option of either pursuing the third DDG 1000, or DDG–51s, keeping in mind that the Navy can buy two DDG–51s for the price of every 1000.

Mr. ALLEN. It is my understanding that the committee is on record for full funding of any vessels in fiscal year 2010 that the Navy decides to build using fiscal 2009 advanced procurement funding which is provided in this bill.

Mr. TAYLOR. Again, the gentleman is correct.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank the gentleman.

You said this, but it's also my understanding that the committee is giving the Navy the option of either shifting back to the DDG–51 program or continuing with the DDG 1000 program; is that right?

Mr. TAYLOR. That's correct. And I would also remind the gentleman that we are working with the Chief of Naval Operations. He has come to us with a proposal. To extend the life of one of our oldest carriers, he would have to spend approximately $2 billion to get an additional 6 months out of that carrier. We are working with the Chief of Naval Operations to give him the option of, instead of spending $2 billion to get an additional 6 months, of taking that $2 billion and applying that money towards an additional surface combatant. And that would certainly help the fleet, and I think it would certainly help Bath Shipyard.

Mr. ALLEN. I appreciate the explanation of the gentleman. And I look forward to working with him to ensure that our Navy gets the finest warship that our combined shipyards can provide.

Mr. TAYLOR. I want to thank the chairman. And I want to encourage all the Members of this body to support the House authorization.

Mr. HUNTER. I want to thank the gentleman who chairs the Seapower Subcommittee for the great work that he has done and turn to another gentleman, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH), who has served for many years, first as chairman, and then ranking member of this very important Personnel Subcommittee which oversees the policies of those 2.5 million Americans who serve in uniform. The gentleman from New York has done a great job, and I would like to yield 4 minutes to Mr. MCHUGH.

Mr. MCHUGH. I thank the gentleman from California for his gracious comments.

Let me start off by returning the favor. This is a monumental bill if for no other reason than it bears the name of the gentleman from California, DUNCAN HUNTER. It also is a bill that represents the departure of two other very senior members of the Defense Committee, the great gentleman from New Jersey, JIM SAXTON, and my classmate, TERRY EVERETT, from the great State of Alabama. All three of these gentlemen have served this committee in the grade tradition in which it is steeped so deeply, and that is of bipartisanship, and of the focus that the important thing, the only thing is to field the finest military the world has ever seen. And through their collective service, they have, indeed, done that.

I want to thank the gentleman from Missouri, the distinguished chairman, for moving the resolution that ultimately named this bill after my dear friend, my great leader, DUNCAN HUNTER, but also, I think, forms the basis of what can only be described as a very, very good bill.

To Chairwoman DAVIS, the gentlelady with whom I have deeply enjoyed serving, I want to commend her for bringing to the floor tonight a Personnel piece, a mark that is predicated upon bipartisanship, predicated upon openness. And I thank her for allowing all of us, myself, of course, but equally, if not more importantly, the other members of the subcommittee and the full committee on both sides of the aisle, the opportunity to have meaningful input to its outcome.

You heard her talk very eloquently, very adequately, very reasonably and correctly about the very, very positive provisions of this Personnel mark. Increases end strength, something this subcommittee has been working on for a number of years to relieve the pressure on those men and women who step forward, who have paid the price of stop loss, who have paid the price of extended deployments. This will help them immeasurably.

The active role of the Army Guard and Reserve and their role in this, so important, the increases to that.

The pay increases that continue the efforts that we had begun some years ago, where the pay gap between the private and the military sectors was 13 percent and has now been taken below 3 percent, that we intend, I hope, collectively, to fully continue education and training opportunities for military spouses, recognizing they are part of this battle as well.

From impact aid to survivor indemnity allowances to TRICARE fees, and on and on and on, this is a bill that every Member of this House should, and I deeply hope will, support.

I said this is a very, very good bill. In all honesty, it could have been a great bill. It could have been a great bill except for a number of important, but I think insufficient, responses to the challenges we had.

A problem that I faced, when I had the honor of being the chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee, was predicated upon the administration's, I would maintain, ill-advised proposal to begin the necessary path toward reforming the cost of military health care on the backs of the recipients. They have proposed it again this year.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. DUNCAN. I yield 2 additional minutes.

Mr. MCHUGH. It was a serious challenge that was resolved in a way that I can honestly say can only be described as a budgetary gimmick. Rather than using all the tools available to it, the Democratic leadership—not the leadership on this committee, but the Democrat leadership of this House—chose, instead, to take from the retirees, those who have already served, a hit of 1 percent of one month of their retiree pay. They had other options and tools available to them, and I honestly believe they took the easy way. I hope we can, from this point forward, use the opportunity of conference and discussion with the administration and, of course, with the Senate to find a better resolution.

Also, I think the fact that the House Budget Resolution that was supposed to be passed today, but I assume will be passed in the very near future, offered a hope, offered the opportunity for the Budget chairman to make decisions about reallocations to address such things as the widows tax, to address other kinds of problems, were not utilized. And we lost a very important opportunity that, whatever one may think about the Democrat Budget Resolution, provided for the first time hope, provided for the first time opportunity, and that has been squandered.

Still, in the days ahead, I think we can take this very, very good bill and elevate it to a great bill.

For the purposes of tonight, however, for the purposes of those who worked hard on it, the gentleman from Missouri, the gentleman from California, all of our subcommittee chairmen and ranking members, this is a bill that reflects, in very fine form, the bipartisan approach of one of the grandest committees, one of the most important committees under the Constitution this House has ever created, the Armed Services Committee, and it deserves our support.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I recognize, for purposes of a unanimous consent request, the gentleman from Ohio.

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 5658, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.

The United States military is unmatched. I therefore maintain that the defense-industrial complex follows a misguided strategy of buying weapons that provide Americans with no increased safety.

We need to provide for the traditional sense of security by first ensuring economic security, health security, and job security for all. The roots of terrorism begin not in hatred, but in desperation. All people, no matter their ethnicity, seek the basic necessities such as food, clothes, shelter, good health, and the ability to earn a decent living. If you can level this playing field, there is no desperation that may potentially evolve into radical hatred.

I will support a defense budget that matches real threats to our security with appropriate defensive measures. Our foreign policy should promote economic stability worldwide, thereby eliminating the roots of terrorism, which stem from desperation. This bill does the opposite by continuing policies of fear and aggression.

The advocates of advanced weapons systems fail to understand these new systems do not match up an effective defense capability with the terrorist threats. Only a new approach to foreign policy can effectively mitigate the terrorist threat.

The ever-rising cost of our military is not financially sustainable. Since 2001 this body has appropriated over $700 billion for all war-related expenses. This bill will provide an additional $70 billion in emergency funding for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. But as we know, the Administration is asking for hundreds of billions of additional funds that this body is expected to consider in the near future.

Now more than ever it is clear that this Administration's occupation and reconstruction of Iraq has failed. The war, waged under false pretenses, has decimated Iraq. Destruction has permeated most of the country. War has taken a very heavy, very real toll. There is increasing concern that militias in Iraq are arising to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. I have urged this body to stop this illegal war. We must honor our troops by bringing them home. I cannot support any measure that continues the illegal occupation of Iraq and continues to undercut our nation's credibility.

The greatest tragedy of this war is the 4,080 American soldiers that have been killed. Tens of thousands more have been injured. Estimates conclude that 1,000,000 innocent Iraqis have died as a result of the U.S. invasion.

Furthermore, the claimed ballistic missile threat is grossly exaggerated. Terrorists do not possess ballistic missiles and the few nation states that do have such missiles have no desire to face the retaliation of our ballistic missiles.

Accordingly, I thank the Committee for undercutting the President's request of $954 million for the European Ground-Based Mid-Course Defense (GMD) program. However, this bill still authorizes $582 million for the European GMD despite a lack of assurance that the system will work or make our national more safe. Funding for the European GMD should be removed entirely.

The Administration claims the system is necessary to defend the U.S. from a long-range ballistic missile attack from Iran. However, Iran is unlikely to pose such a threat to the United States in the foreseeable future due to the immense technical difficulties that Iran would have to overcome to create a long-range ballistic missile capable of reaching the U.S.

In fact, it is conceivable that the U.S. will have its own technical difficulties to overcome before such a system can be proven viable. The Test and Evaluation department of the Pentagon cautions that many more tests under realistic conditions would be needed before conceding our capability to shoot down an offensive missile.

The citizens of the Czech Republic and Poland clearly reject the proposed agreement. Public opinion polls in the Czech Republic and Poland reflect strong opposition to the placement of the radar and interceptors in their respective countries and strained their relations with Russia. The GMD proposal has by some accounts exacerbated U.S.-Russia relations. The U.S. has shared information but not meaningfully cooperated with Russia in these negotiations. Because the Czech Republic and Poland fall within the boundaries of former Russian influence, U.S. action with regard to the GMD have been perceived by Russia as an intrusion. There can be no doubt that U.S. efforts to impose the GMD are perceived as an obstruction to the diplomatic ties between our nations.

A total of $9.3 billion will go to the Department of Energy for nuclear weapons activities, $1.455 billion of these funds will wisely go to Nonproliferation programs and I thank my colleagues for their work to increase these programs by $208 million above the President's request. However, this still leaves roughly $7.9 billion that supports and maintains nuclear stockpiles.

The U.S. Administration has established a record of unilateralism and that undercuts our nation's credibility in the eyes of other nations. In just under eight years the U.S. Administration had backtracked on international treaties and conventions. The U.S. has rejected the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, refused to sign the Land Mine Treaty, withdrawn from the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty, unsigned the Kyoto Protocol, and blocked a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention. It is time for the U.S. to uphold international law. It is time for the U.S. to stand for dialogue and diplomacy. It is time for the United States to rethink our policies and set upon a new strategy of strength through peace.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, before I recognize the gentlelady from California, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Mississippi.

Mr. TAYLOR. I thank the chairman.

I was very much in the wrong for failing to mention the great work of your committee staff, headed by Ms. Conaton, and in particular Captain Will Ebbs of the Seapower Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity for correcting my mistake. I do want to very much compliment the men and women of the House Armed Services Committee staff who have helped put this package together.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, the gentlelady from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ), who is also a senior member of the Armed Services Committee.

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Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. I wish to thank Chairman SKELTON for his hard work and leadership in developing this important piece of legislation.

And, Mr. Chairman, I would also like to say to the gentlemen who are retiring this year, I think just on the top row of our committee, we are probably losing collectively about 65 years of experience on this committee, and it has been my pleasure over the last 12 years to serve on this committee with you all, and you will sorely be missed and the institutional knowledge that you carry will be missed also. So we have a lot of good colleagues who are leaving the Congress this year.

This legislation provides critical support to our Armed Forces through many important initiatives. I'm proud that the legislation, for example, provides a 3.9 percent across-the-board pay raise for the members of our services. And in addition, H.R. 5658 prohibits the implementation of the President's proposals to increase health care co-pays and cost sharing for beneficiaries of the TRICARE health care and pharmacy services.

This bill also takes a step in providing for the first time ever the military preventative health care programs, which will improve the lives of our servicemembers, of our retirees, and family members. Preventative health care has been proven to improve individuals' long-term health and to provide substantial cost savings since healthier people require less medical service. And I'm very pleased that Chairwoman DAVIS proposed this innovative health care program and that it is also paid for.

This bill also includes several proposals that I sought to have included. And as the ranking woman on the Armed Services Committee, I am proud that one of these provisions establishes a centralized case-level database of information about sexual assaults that involve our servicemembers. The database will be consistent with all privacy guidelines and restrictions while tracking information about the nature of assaults and the outcome of any legal proceedings in connection with the assault.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield the gentlewoman 30 seconds.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Chairman, this is a very important step towards ensuring accountability for sexual assaults involving our servicemembers.

I'm also very proud that per my request this bill requires the Department of Defense to conduct a study of its bandwidth needs for the near and long term. This study will help us ensure that the department has the capability to operate the advanced information technology systems that our military relies on.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. It really is a great bill. And thank you to all of our Chair people and ranking members for having made it such a great bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, at this time I yield 5 minutes to my colleague and friend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Readiness.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 5658, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. The bill before us today reflects our concern about the continuing decline in the readiness posture of our Armed Forces.

And I would like to thank the ranking member of my subcommittee, Mr. FORBES from Virginia, for his help in bringing together this excellent bill. He played a very key role and was very instrumental in putting the readiness and military construction bill together. I would like to say thank you for a great job.

Also, Chairman SKELTON.

And my good friend who is going to be retiring soon. DUNCAN, you and I have gone through a lot. Thank you for all the work that you've done, and we hope to continue on.

More than 6 years of continuous combat operations have strained readiness. This strain is manifesting itself in more aspects of our military forces. The bill authorizes $143 million for operation and maintenance. To address the readiness shortfalls in equipment, training, and maintenance, we have added $932 million to the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, National Guard, and Reserve operations and maintenance accounts.

In addition, we have added funds for Army training, pre-positioned stocks, and aircraft maintenance in our authorization of the fiscal year 2009 supplemental.

In response to the Defense Department's increasing reliance on contractor services, this bill requires a comprehensive analysis of what constitutes an ''inherently governmental function.'' It requires the Office of Management and Budget to develop a single definition that may be used consistently by all Federal agencies.

The bill includes provisions to address civilians deployed in combat zones. It gives DOD authority to extend the waiver of limitations on premium pay. It also asks for a thorough review of the medical policies and treatment procedures for civilians deployed to support military operations.

To address depot workloads following equipment reset, the bill requires the Department of Defense to contract for an independent assessment of the depot capability that will be needed in the future.

The bill takes several actions related to energy and environmental policy. It authorizes $80 million for energy conservation projects and updates installation energy reporting requirements.

For military construction, base realignment, and closure and family housing in fiscal year 2009, the bill authorizes more than $24 billion.

The bill includes several provisions related to BRAC. In the time since the 2005 BRAC Commission reported its recommendations, we have seen costs increase almost 50 percent and the savings have declined. If a future administration were to request a new round of closures, the BRAC process will need to be dramatically different. As such, this year's bill repeals the BRAC Commission and the process that arrived at the 2005 decisions. At the same time, we remain steadfast to completing the 2005 BRAC round on time, by September, 2011, and have fully funded the administration's request.

To address our alarm at finding our troops in run-drown and broken barracks, the bill directs that $500 million in the fiscal year 2009 supplemental be used to arrest the declining state of military facilities.

The bill also does many good things for South Texas, which I represent. I am pleased that the replacement of the main production facility at Corpus Christi Army Depot was authorized. Corpus Christi Army Depot is the cornerstone of aviation readiness for the Department of Defense. It is vital that the current outdated facility be replaced so that dedicated employees of Corpus Christi Army Depot can continue to deliver products to the military in the most efficient and timely manner.

I support H.R. 5658, and I am proud of what this bill does to restore strength to our military. This is a very responsible bill. However, I'm disappointed that our committee adopted an amendment to provide the Department of Defense funding for the southwest border wall. I hope that in the future, defense funding will not be used to build walls.

That said, this is a good bill. The chairman of the full committee and the ranking member have done an outstanding job.

RANDY FORBES, thank you for your dedication and your input.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to add my thanks to the great gentleman from Texas for his hard work.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to another gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY), who has done a great job in working through the very difficult issues of the Terrorism Subcommittee.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, first let me express my gratitude and my admiration for those senior members of the committee who are leaving Congress, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. EVERETT); the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON); and the gentleman from California, our former Chair (Mr. HUNTER), for whom this bill is appropriately named. It has certainly been an honor for me to work with and to learn from each of them over the years as they worked to protect the country's security.

Mr. Chairman, the portion of this bill produced by the Terrorism and Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, which has been very ably led by Chairman SMITH, I think is worthy of all Members' support. It enables the Special Operations command forces to remain on the cutting edge of our fight against terrorists with the equipment and the resources and the authorities that they need. This portion of the bill supports the research activities at DARPA and at the individual services, which are the foundation of our future military and therefore the foundation of our future security. This portion of the bill makes decisions in a host of other areas from information technology to chem-bio defense and force protection, and I think it makes good decisions.

I want to say I also appreciate particularly the comments of Chairman SKELTON regarding the importance of the inter-agency process and the efforts of him and Chairman SMITH on strategic communications. Both of those things are absolutely essential for the fight against terrorists as well as for the country's broader security.

Mr. Chairman, I think this is a good bill, and as others have said, it deserves full support in this House. I don't think you can bring a bill to the floor, however, that looks after the country's national security and particularly a portion that talks about terrorists without acknowledging that this Congress is about to go on recess without doing two of the most important things that it could do in the fight against terrorists and to protect our country's security.

It seems this week we have had time to debate a bill to pay foreigners to take care of potentially rare dogs and cats. We have had time to debate and vote on a bill to commemorate Frank Sinatra. But we have not had time this week to debate and vote on a clean supplemental that can become law that will fund the troops who are actually on the front lines of this fight. We have not had time, we have not been able to vote, on the Senate FISA modernization bill, which is absolutely essential both for the troops and for protecting us here at home.

So this is a good bill. This committee has done good work. But I think it challenges all of us in this broader fight against terrorists to do all of our work and to do all that is our responsibility to defend the country, and I hope we do.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, at this point I would like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN), ranking member of Oversight.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you, Congressman HUNTER, for yielding. Let me just take a moment to thank you also for your great leadership on this committee through the many years. What a fantastic teacher you've been to some of the newer members. I'm so thankful for your leadership, your patience.

And also the gentleman from Mr. EVERETT's district, Mr. SAXTON, great leadership.

Then I would also like to say, Chairman SKELTON, thank you very much. You make the people from Missouri proud for the way that you've continued the good tone of the committee. I think it was really a classy thing to name this bill after Congressman HUNTER, and it just shows the quality of leadership that you've provided, and so I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, as well.

As the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Dr. SNYDER has been doing a great job. We've had a chance to look into a number of different subjects, particularly progress in the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. This bill contains some of the things that we discovered particularly in the importance of Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the important work that's been done on that subcommittee.

I would just like to say that there's a lot of criticism of Congress. In fact, I think our popularity rating publicly is maybe not too good. But on the other hand, I think what the public would really like to see is they'd like to see us stop bickering and just plain solve some programs. I think this committee and the subcommittees have been largely a good example of that, and that's because of the tone of the leadership that we've seen.

As others have before, I have my opinions about how this bill could be improved, and there are several areas that I am concerned with. The first are the significant cuts to missile defense and particularly the missile defense that needs to be built in Poland and the Czech Republic. I believe that that missile defense is critical for the defense of our country from Iran and also some Western European nations from Iran.

□ 2030

I think it's the wrong time to be cutting missile defense. We have just had a very successful demonstration of this technology, as we shot down a rogue satellite that had a lot of hydrazine in the fuel tank, and we were able to get rid of that threat very effectively.

So aside from missile defense, there's one other area that I am distressed about, and that is the only comprehensive major Army modernization program in the last 30 or 40 years, which we now know as Future Combat System. That has also had a number of hundred million dollars removed from it. It's something we have discussed in committee. I think it's a wrong decision. Next year, we are going to make a go or no-go on this overall program, and to be continuing to slash and cut away at that budget, I think, is counterproductive.

This said, my only other complaint is there's just not enough money in this budget to fund defense the way I wish we could. But if there are constituents who would like to see people who are just rolling up their sleeves and solving problems, all they need to do is come to the authorizing committee of the Armed Services.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 5 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE), who's also the chairman of the Subcommittee on Air and Land Forces.

(Mr. ABERCROMBIE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Chairman, I have the honor to serve as the chairman of the Air and Land Forces Subcommittee of our Armed Services Committee. I would like first to thank my own personal archbishop, Doug Roach, and all the acolytes on the Air and Land subcommittee, the subcommittee staff. They do a terrific job working with IKE SKELTON's overall staff, led by Erin. I cannot tell you what a pleasure it is every day to be working with them in the manner in which they conduct themselves; professional, disciplined, focused, something I wish I could say about myself more often than I do.

Again, on the personal comment side, I want to thank my good friend, DUNCAN HUNTER. Always, without fail, in all these years, attentive, polite, always welcoming commentary and seeking advice. We may say farewell to you, DUNCAN, but we will not be saying goodbye.

Finally, Mr. JIM SAXTON, whom I don't see on the floor today. JIM SAXTON may have his position taken, but no one is going to replace him in this Congress. He has been my friend. He has been my mentor. I have served as a ranking member on various committees, not just here, but on other committees, as well as having the opportunity to chair. I never considered myself a ranking member or a chairman where JIM SAXTON was concerned. We were colleagues.

This bill is about balancing the capabilities and readiness of our current military forces with future required military capabilities. Our military personnel is at risk each and every day. The first priority is to make sure the men and women in uniform are properly supported by ensuring our military programs adequately support current military requirements.

We cannot short-change our personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan in their need for adequate equipment and the needs of our National Guard units here at home for what they may require to respond to potential national disasters. Promised future capabilities that have already been delayed because of overly optimistic and unmet schedules cannot subsume meeting today's demonstrated needs.

The Air and Land Forces Subcommittee's jurisdiction includes $90 billion in Army and Air Force programs. Our objective, Mr. Chairman, is clear, to ensure that our military personnel get the best available equipment as soon as it has been properly tested, equipment like armored vehicles, body armor, improvised explosive device jammers, unmanned aerial vehicles, small arms, and night vision devices.

We address key requirements: An increase in Army procurement and research of $557 million over the budget request, procurement and research where it's needed now, demonstrating the commitment of the Armed Services Committee to meeting these many needs. The Army in particular is carrying the heaviest burden of all the services in the war in which we are now engaged. This bill shifts funding to critical Army priorities now; $2.6 billion to fund sustainments costs for the tactical vehicle referred to as the MRAP, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle, to better protect our personnel against mines and improvised explosive devices; $2.7 billion for counterimprovised explosive device programs, $949 million for Humvees, $783 million for body armor; $800 million for funding for much-needed National Guard and Reserve equipment.

Yes, we have reallocated funds in this budget where we have to meet the needs of the serving Army and Air Force today.

Fifteen C–17 strategic airlift aircraft added, at a cost of $3.9 billion dollars. It maintains the C–17 production line and sustains the strategic airlift fleet. Joint Strike Fighter competitive engine program has been funded for $526 million to provide necessary competition of two producers of engines for that program; $246 million added for systems to counter rocket and mortar attacks on our forces.

To fund these priorities, we had to make reallocation choices to fund the highest priorities. Some programs will have to make adjustments. No program is adversely compromised. On the contrary, increased accountability and increased oversight are the result.

In closing, I want to thank the distinguished chairman, all the ranking members of the full committee and the subcommittees, and may I say, Mr. SKELTON, as I close, that it is a particular pleasure and an honor to serve with you. As I stand here today, I am thinking of Suzie Skelton. I know how proud she is of you.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I want to add my thanks to the gentleman from Hawaii for his excellent work, and I want to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. FORBES),

who is the ranking member of the Readiness Subcommittee.

Mr. FORBES. It's my pleasure to rise in strong support of this bill tonight. I also want to express my feelings about what a rare moment this is in Congress when you can have a committee like this where the members on both sides of the aisle have such friendships, where they are able to work together in a bipartisan solution to defend this country, and where they can pass a bill of this magnitude unanimously, and that is due in large measure to the leadership of our chairman, Chairman SKELTON, also to the leadership of our ranking member, DUNCAN HUNTER, and to the chairman of our Readiness subcommittee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ).

We've heard a lot of people today talk about the great leadership of DUNCAN HUNTER. The truth is that we could stand here all night and we wouldn't say enough because there is and has been no greater champion for the men and women that we have in uniform and for the national defense of this country than DUNCAN HUNTER. DUNCAN, we appreciate your great work.

This is a good bill. This bill provides more than $550 million in funding above the President's request to address much-needed equipment, repairs, and maintenance that will particularly help the National Guard and the Reserves. When you add that to the additional depot maintenance provided in the bill, it's a great step towards restoring readiness.

Additionally, the bill provide $650 million to increase funding to repair aging barracks for the Army and Marine Corps. We also send a clear message that this committee and this Congress is going to fully fund and implement the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure round by the September, 2011 deadline, and we are not going to forget the communities that are impacted by BRAC, especially those that will have large increases of students because we are going to provide the new Federal education funds immediately rather than making them wait for the next year.

While so many of the provisions make this a good bill, there are two points where I think we can do better, and I hope we do so in the conference with the Senate. In the first case, this bill explicitly prohibits public-private competition for 3 years, competitions that could have saved the military billions of dollars and avoided costs which they could use for additional weapons, additional personnel, additional benefits. The government does not have a monopoly on good ideas. If a company can prove in a fair and open competition that it can do the government's work for less, that company should have the opportunity.

In the second case, there is a very well-intended provision to ensure we have world class facilities at the new Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Unfortunately, the more we have learned about the impact of this provision, the more I am concerned that it would result in broken construction contracts and delays that would cost the taxpayers millions of dollars in redesign and construction costs, with no tangible benefit to our servicemen and women.

With those exceptions, I am extremely proud of this bill, and I urge all my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the bill, as it will do much to restore the readiness of our military.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 5 minutes to my good friend, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER), who's also the chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mr. SNYDER. Power, Mr. Chairman, is the goal of a good defense bill for this country. Every nation wants to be powerful enough to keep safe. Not every dispute, however, is resolved by military power, not every hope for the future is achieved by military power. Power is more than just military power. It's economic, diplomatic, the moral authority that a nation has.

Secretary Robert Gates, our Secretary of Defense, has done, I think, two very admirable things as Secretary of Defense. One, he has restored the confidence in the decision-making process in the Pentagon. Second, he has pointed to the broad aspects of power for this country. We are all very familiar with his speech to Kansas State back in November of last year, in which he called for dramatic increases, not in the Defense Department, but dramatic increases in the State Department, dramatic increases in budget, dramatic increases in staff.

He called for the staff and funding for the USAID, the Agency for International Development. Mr. SKELTON arranged for Secretary Gates and Secretary Rice to testify before our full Armed Services Committee on the importance of interagency communication and collaboration, not just within the Pentagon, but between the State Department and the Defense and USAID and the other agencies in the government because it is important to our national defense, to our overall concept of power, not just military power.

Well, this bill contains some provisions that deal with some of these issues. First of all, some time ago this body, the House, passed H.R. 1084, Representative SAM FARR's bill, that came out of the Foreign Affairs Committee. It deals with the whole issue of establishing a Civilian Reserve Board to deal with the fact that we sometimes need civilian employees to go into areas of instability and even of war. But we haven't been able to have the kind of personnel we wanted and the numbers in the time that we need.

So we passed this bill, but it's been hung up in the Senate by one Senator. So just by unanimous agreement of the Democrats and Republicans on the Armed Services Committee and with the consent and advocacy of Mr. BERMAN, that was included as part of this bill, unchanged from how it was passed before, and so it will now have a second chance to go to the Senate and be passed.

I am also looking forward to the fact that tomorrow, Mr. SKELTON, along with Mr. BERMAN and Ms. LOWEY, will be introducing an amendment that will establish a standing advisory panel on improving integration between the Department of Defense, Department of State, and the United States Agency for International Development on matters of national security.

I will always remember one of my constituents, a veterinarian from Arkansas, who served in both Afghanistan and then a year in Iraq. She sent me an e-mail about halfway through her year in Iraq, in which she said, and we were talking about this issue of interagency cooperation, she said, I sometimes think and feel that the differences in divisions between the agencies of the United States Government are greater than the differences between us and the Iraqis. That is saying something in terms of inhibiting our ability to have the kind of national defense we want. So I applaud Mr. BERMAN and Mr. SKELTON and Ms. LOWEY for doing this amendment.

This bill is about military families, it's about our men and women in uniform. We do a lot of things in this bill for military families in great detail. But it's also time for this country, and I hope it will occur in our Presidential debate that will be going on over the next several months, but it certainly needs to occur in this Congress and in our committee. It's time to step back and look at the big picture. What should the grand national security strategy involving all components of our power, and all the threats out there, what should the grand strategy be for this country to face and achieve over the next 5 years and 10 years and 15 and 20 years. Chairman SKELTON and I and Subcommittee Chairman AKIN and I have been talking about these issues and hope to start some efforts to look at these big pictures.

Finally, I want to commend both Chairman SKELTON, but the three Republican Members that are leaving us. DUNCAN HUNTER, who, when former Chairman Floyd Spence was ill, stepped in as the acting chairman with a great generous spirit and in a very graceful manner to take over for our beloved and ailing Floyd Spence, and then also serve with distinction as chairman, and perhaps partly because of his fine military service as a young man. Mr. EVERETT, we will be missing his contributions.

I finally want to say a word about JIM SAXTON of New Jersey because I was his ranking member when I think it was Speaker Hastert established a panel on terrorism.

□ 2045

Before there was ever a September 11, 2001, JIM SAXTON was leading a series of

classified briefings and hearings on the threat of terrorism and the threat of al Qaeda, long before any of us learned to pronounce the phrase ''al Qaeda,'' and I commend him for the work that he has done. I would just say that I think this is a great bill and applaud the work.

Mr. SKELTON. Let me add, if I may, an additional 30 seconds, Mr. Chairman. The gentleman spoke about the need to study strategy. After we passed the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986, I chaired a panel on professional military education that did a great deal in upgrading the Senior and Immediate War Colleges. The Senior War Colleges really are the bosom of where strategic thought, both military as well as diplomatic, is taught and is learned. Sometimes the lessons that are so plain to those in the War Colleges do not seem to be learned by others in responsible positions. That is why I think the thought of working on strategic thought itself is an excellent one, and I commend the gentleman.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, the last gentleman who spoke, I want to thank him for his kind words. But I am reminded that the chairman has been the guardian of professional military education and his work has been to try to make sure that our officers have a context in which they can place the activities in this very real war that many of them are engaged in in our history and to see situations that have gone before and to gain insights from that history, and I want to applaud the chairman for that.

I want to yield 3 minutes to another gentleman who has been a great worker on this committee and a leader, a guy who has moved over from the Rules Committee, finally traded up and got back to the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Georgia (Dr. GINGREY).

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I rise in strong support of H.R. 5658, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. I want to thank Chairman SKELTON, Ranking Member HUNTER, and my subcommittee chairman, NEIL ABERCROMBIE, and Ranking Member JIM SAXTON, for their tireless efforts on behalf of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines who continue to bravely defend us at both home and abroad.

While it is not a perfect bill, this legislation covers a wide scope of issues that are of vital importance to the armed services, both the active and reserve component, and it clearly addresses the most pressing needs of our troops in the most trying times that we face in America.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that the Armed Services Committee voted unanimously and on a bipartisan basis to support another program critical to our national security. Section 943 of this bill states that the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, WHINSEC, is one of the most effective mechanisms that the United States has to build relationships with future leaders throughout our hemisphere and influence the human rights and democracy trajectory of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and mitigate the growing influence of non-hemispheric powers.

It is especially important to remember that WHINSEC may be the only medium we ever have to engage the future military and political leaders of Latin American countries, who are, by the way, America's closest neighbors and can serve as our closest allies. If we were not to engage with these nations, the void would be filled by countries with starkly different values than our own regarding democracy, and, yes, human rights, and I am talking about countries like Venezuela and China, whose influence in the region, as we know, is growing.

The WHINSEC school in Columbus, Georgia, at Fort Benning, the home of the infantry, was formerly part of my congressional district. I am very proud to continue to serve on the Board of Visitors of the school.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to further mention how pleased I am of the work of the committee this year to authorize funding for 20 F–22 Raptors in line with the current multiyear contract, and also to authorize the advanced procurement funds needed for a follow-on lot in 2010. The F–22 is the world's most capable fighter, and these funds go a long way towards providing stability for our forces and ensuring that America maintains air dominance for the foreseeable future.

There is so much to be proud of in this bill, and I again commend Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER for their efforts to keep this bill focused on the needs of the warfighter. I would also like to take this opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to recognize Ranking Member HUNTER, Air and Land Forces Subcommittee Ranking Member SAXTON, and the ranking member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, TERRY EVERETT of Alabama, for all their contributions, both to the Armed Services Committee and to the Congress over the years.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Georgia has expired.

Mr. HUNTER. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. GINGREY. All of these Members have been a source of wisdom and guidance to me, my colleagues on the committee and to the Nation, and they will be sorely missed.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Chairman, I am happy to yield 2 minutes to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY), a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Hunter defense authorization bill, whose primary mission under the leadership of Chairman SKELTON is to restore military readiness to America's Armed Forces. As has been stated earlier this evening, the bill focuses on investing in short-term readiness, with increased commitment and investment to reset the ground troops of this country as well as the National Guard. But as Mr. HUNTER indicated in his opening remarks, it also looks over the horizon to deal with military readiness issues that are not being addressed and have been neglected for far too long.

One of those is the size of the American Navy. When the Bush administration took office in 2002, the size of America's Navy was 315 ships and submarines. It has declined to 276, and, shockingly, that number is going to in fact accelerate, because we are basically living off a legacy fleet that was built during the Reagan area.

Last year, I was proud to be part of an effort that turned around this decline. We invested $588 million in advance procurement to the Virginia class submarine program, the most successful shipbuilding program according to both the Navy and outside experts, and this year we continue that effort with Mr. HUNTER's leadership on a motion at the committee to add to the Seapower Subcommittee's $300 million advance procurement. His motion, the Hunter-Courtney amendment, added $422 million, and we are now moving the Navy's shipbuilding schedule to two submarines a year starting in 2010 with this legislation.

The industrial base is ready for this challenge. We know that from again the testimony from both Virginia and Connecticut. My district is the home of the Electric Boat, which is, again, one of the most successful shipbuilders in the country in terms of the Virginia class program. The last submarine, the USS New Hampshire, was delivered with 1 million fewer man-hours in terms of production compared to the prior submarine that they built.

This investment which this legislation represents will allow this country to again be ready for long-term challenges. The world is changing, there are new maritime forces that are growing in different parts of the world, and I strongly urge support and passage of the Hunter defense authorization bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman who just spoke for his kind remarks.

I want to yield 2 minutes to another gentleman who has come back from the Rules Committee, traded up to come back to the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman who has such a large set of military facilities in his district and pays so much attention to those facilities and to the national issue of security, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding. Let me say to the gentleman that coming back to the Armed Services Committee from Rules is as close to a resurrection experience that I expect to have on this side of the veil.

I am particularly pleased to rise in support of this legislation, H.R. 5658,

the National Defense Authorization Act, and I am particularly pleased that it is named for my good friend and our distinguished colleague, Mr. HUNTER, who served our country in so many ways, in uniform, in Congress, and certainly with great distinction and great fairness on both sides with both sides of the aisle as former chairman of our committee.

I particularly want to thank our current chairman, Mr. SKELTON, who presides so professionally with such personal integrity and so thoughtfully over this important committee, and our staff, which does great work on a bipartisan basis.

This committee really does work the way that I think most Americans wish Congress worked, and I think it sets an outstanding example that I wish others would follow.

There is very much in this bill, Mr. Chairman, that is excellent. I am particularly pleased with the increase in family support, the focus on additional barracks, the additional money in the research, development, testing, evaluation and procurement accounts, the $70 billion set aside for continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a commitment to address the rest of the needs that our men and women in the field have. When we have forces deployed, whether we agree with the purpose or not, they should never, ever doubt our commitment to seeing that they have everything they need, fully and in a timely fashion, and this committee does its best to do that.

But there are some disappointments in this bill as well, Mr. Chairman. I am particularly disappointed, like my friend Mr. AKIN, in the cut in the Future Combat System funding of $233 billion from the request that the President sent forward. We are going to regret that on some battlefield in some dangerous place at some point in the future. I am particularly disappointed that we did not in a serious fashion deal with Mr. SAXTON's amendment that was offered.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HUNTER. I yield the gentleman 1 additional minute.

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman, I am particularly disappointed that we did not deal in a serious fashion in my opinion with Mr. SAXTON's amendment, which would have set a baseline of 4 percent of our GNP for future military funding. That is something we know we need to do. We know in this committee on a bipartisan basis that we spend too little. That is a mistake we have made on both sides of the aisle. It is a bipartisan mistake.

We cut far too much during the 1990s. History teaches us and our chairman often appropriately lectures us that contingencies will come that we do not understand and do not anticipate, and we know from the bitter lessons of history that if we have not prepared through sustained investment in our military, we can never make up lost ground with hasty and ill-thought out appropriations in the short-term. I wish we had done that. I hope we will do that in the amendment process.

But, Mr. Chairman, the perfect cannot be the enemy of the good, and this bill is very, very good and is a product of genuine bipartisan cooperation. So I am very proud to support it and very proud to urge other Members of the Congress to vote for it.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Chairman, at this time I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE).

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Chairman, I want to take this minute to highlight one particular provision of this bill that is very important to me.

Like many Americans last year, I was outraged to learn that the Pentagon was denying combat wounded veterans their enlistment bonuses, apparently in the belief that they had not fulfilled their obligations to the military because they had been wounded in service to this country. Well, like most people in this House, I think that if you have been injured in service to this country, you have done more than we ever could have asked you to do. You have borne every burden and you have fulfilled your obligation.

So I introduced the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act to ensure that every combat wounded veteran gets the enlistment bonus that they deserve. That legislation has been included in its entirety in this legislation that we are passing today. I thank Chairman SKELTON for including it in the bill, and I encourage my colleagues to support it to remedy this grave injustice.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS).

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Thank you, Mr. HUNTER.

You know, Mr. Chairman, there has been a lot said tonight about DUNCAN HUNTER. I guess the only thing I can add is simply to repeat that this man served his country in Vietnam as an Army Ranger. He served 26 years in this House, part of the time in the majority, served as chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and has now served a total of 28 years in this Congress. His entire life has been about service to this country and the cause of human freedom, and I truly believe that future generations will have a greater hope to live in freedom because this man lived, and I salute him with all of my heart.

Mr. Chairman, I also support this bill. I only rise to associate some of my feelings with those expressed by TERRY EVERETT, the ranking member of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, when he was concerned that the amendments that he offered to raise and restore some of the missile defense cuts in the mark had not taken place.

He was especially concerned about the European site, the money that was cut there, that it sends a message to Poland and other places like that that are already in a very, very dangerous position politically and in such a delicate situation that they may in fact lose the project because of the message that we send to them.

□ 2100

I believe it is very important that we realize that the missile defense site in Poland is not just about missile defense, it is about devaluing an entire nuclear missile program in the hands of an Iranian nation.

Mr. Chairman, the very first purpose of this government is to defend its citizens in peace, and I believe one of the greatest threats to human peace in the world is a nuclear Iran.

In spite of what we have heard in the media, Iran continues to enrich uranium which could give them an atomic bomb in less than 3 years. The IAEA has reported that in the 9-month period between February and November of 2007, the number of centrifuges enriching uranium operating at its Natanz enrichment facility tripled from 1,000 to now approximately 3,000 centrifuges.

The Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, earlier this year said to the Senate Intelligence Committee that he concurred with the Israeli intelligence report stating that this many centrifuges operating continuously would produce enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon in less than 2 years. We now know that Iran is increasing its number of operational centrifuges from 3,000 to 9,000. Moreover, Mr. Chairman, Iran is now beginning to manufacture its own centrifuge, the IR2, which improves on the advanced P2 centrifuge that was used in Pakistan to build its existing nuclear arsenal. It is capable of producing enriched uranium two to three times faster than the older models.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield the gentleman 1 additional minute.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Chairman, some of the most dangerous and lethal weapons our soldiers are facing in Iraq right now are there because Iran gave it to them. Osama bin Laden said: It is our religious duty to gain nuclear weapons.

If Iran is allowed to proliferate nuclear weapons into the hands of terrorists, any sense or concept of peace that we have experienced in this country so far could be gone in a blinding flash in the center of one of our major cities, maybe even in Washington, DC. And yet this majority has prevented us from voting on a military contingency plan to prevent Iran from gaining this deadly capability.

Mr. Chairman, very simply, the highway of history is littered with the dangers of strategic ambiguity, and I believe our best hope of preventing a nuclear Iran is to help them understand that we are prepared to do whatever is necessary, including a military contingency, if they continue to pursue their nuclear capability.

I hope that our children are not faced with the consequences of that strategic ambiguity. We need to be very, very clear. We need to vote on the amendment to improve this bill tomorrow.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Chairman, at this time I am happy to yield 2 minutes to my friend and colleague from Massachusetts (Ms. TSONGAS), a new member of the Armed Services Committee.

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. I want to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER for their leadership on this legislation. As a new member of the House and of the committee, it has been a pleasure participating in the bipartisan and respectful process that both of you have created.

H.R. 5658 addresses our immediate readiness challenges while maintaining our commitment to modernization that will keep our country safe and deter threats in the future.

We are all in agreement that operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are having a severe impact on our readiness. This legislation puts us on track to restore our readiness and our capability to respond to emerging threats around the world. It also increases our capabilities in Afghanistan by providing performance standards for Provincial Reconstruction Teams, training and equipping the Afghan National Security Forces, and increasing the Commanders Emergency Response Fund. And this bill takes significant strides to improve the quality of life for our men and women in uniform and their families. H.R. 5658 includes a 3.9 percent pay increase. It rejects on a bipartisan basis the proposed increases in TRICARE fees and copays.

Finally, I appreciate that the committee included a provision that I have advocated for that would give flexibility to the Department of Defense to increase the loan repayment amount for medical personnel in the National Guard and Reserve.

Mr. Chairman, as my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee have stated, this is a good bill. It addresses the readiness needs of our military, keeps us on track for modernization to meet future threats, and takes care of our military personnel and their families. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Chairman, I now yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Chairman, I also want to add my congratulations and words of appreciation to our chairman and ranking member for the terrific job they did on this year's defense authorization act.

The members of our Armed Forces, whether during times of war or peace, deserve the wholehearted support and moral and financial commitment and support from its citizens and its government. I believe this support from this committee of our men and women in uniform is undeniable. This bill does support the national defense mission, the individual servicemember, and the military family. However, it is not complete. We are continually increasing the demands of this voluntary force, but our budget does not provide the needed resources for the military with a growing responsibility and mission.

Some of these shortcomings includes cuts to future combat systems, cuts to anti-missile defense systems, and the Marines are getting cuts in the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle. This vehicle would replace the aging 38-year-old Amphibious Assault Vehicle that they currently rely on in getting from their ships to the shore and exposes our Navy to unnecessary risks, and I am concerned about these cuts.

But there are a lot of things to be in favor of in this bill. With respect to SOCOM, these warfighters, as you know, operate throughout the globe conducting missions that most of us will never hear about but are absolutely essential and critical to defend against the unconventional threats and preventing additional threats and crises around the globe.

We support these warfighters, these magnificent warfighters by fully funding their requirements. In addition, we added some $186 million to provide for their unfunded requirements that they have on those lists for surveillance capabilities and personnel protection gear. We also authorized 26 human terrain teams that they have requested, and supports our National Guard with some $800 million in additional money for equipment.

With respect to our troops and their family welfare, we are in complete agreement that the individual marine, sailor, soldier, and airman is our most valuable national security asset. They stand between this Nation and those who wish to do us harm and, along with their families, sacrifice daily in defense of this Nation and our freedoms. This bill reflects our commitment and responsibility to ensure that they are taken care of. We are giving them a 3.9 percent pay raise, some $650 million to improve barracks, and the elimination of all temporary barracks between now and 2015.

We are going to add to their force, to their numbers so that they can spread their responsibilities across a greater number of soldiers and marines. We are re-equipping and resetting these forces with additional funding provided for unfunded readiness initiatives, for training shortfalls within the Army and Marine Corps. In addition we are providing gear in the field to be used immediately with MRAPs, additional body armor, and up-armored Humvees.

Mr. Chairman, while we may disagree with how these assets, tools, and, most importantly, this personnel are used, there should be no disagreement that we should provide this Nation with the personnel, assets, and tools to protect this country with overwhelming force to counter any and all threats. This bill moves us toward that goal, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, the gentlelady from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER), who is also a member of our Armed Services Committee.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I rise today in support of this bill, and I thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER for bringing it to the floor and for their great work. I want to also thank Chairman ORTIZ and Chairwoman DAVIS for their work during the subcommittee markup and the committee staff for their hard work throughout the process.

Mr. Chairman, this is an excellent bill that will have a tremendous impact on our servicemembers and their families, and I am proud to support it. As a former military spouse, I know how much our troops and their families depend on the strong support from Congress.

In this year's bill, we grow the military, adding 7,000 soldiers, 5,000 marines, 1,000 sailors, and 450 airmen to take the pressure off the current military. We add a 3.9 percent pay increase and increase existing bonuses. We provide nearly $25 billion for the defense health program without increasing TRICARE fees. We increase benefits for Guardsmen and Reservists as well. These actions are the way that we show that we do support the troops and their families, and this is the way we thank them for their service.

We designate money to keep F–22 fighters and C–17s rolling off the production line. These two programs are vital to our Air Force. We add a second Virginia class sub and the resources in our shipyard system to maintain them. We include more than $12 million for cold weather clothing systems that keep our men and women warm in the mountains of Afghanistan. In this year's bill we provide our Army aviation assets with advanced self-protection systems that keep our soldiers safe in harm's way.

We also fund programs at home, like the Swimmer Detection Network that protects our Los Angeles and Virginia class submarines at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in my district. We fund military construction projects at our shipyards and depots that are vital to our Nation's defenses, and we add billions for housing at our bases that ensure our servicemembers and their families are safe and comfortable.

I am proud that we worked together in a truly bipartisan manner to produce this bill that cares for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines and their families. I urge the House to pass this bill.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Chairman, I now yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN).

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009,

and I would like to thank Chairman SKELTON and Ranking Member HUNTER for their extraordinary leadership and their bipartisan manner in which this bill was crafted, and also would like to recognize Ranking Member HUNTER's extraordinary legacy of leadership as he leaves us as his duty on this committee expires.

I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the important aspects of this bill. Nothing is more vital to our Nation's forward presence and security than the aircraft carrier, and it remains unacceptable to allow the total number of aircraft carriers to diminish.

Maintaining the statutory requirement of 11 aircraft carriers is essential to maintaining our superiority on the high seas, and we must continue to develop the industrial base and promote shipbuilding to establish a floor, not a ceiling, of 313 ships in our Navy. I urge support for this important aspect of this bill.

I would also like to take a moment to discuss the importance of directed energy and electromagnetic weapons systems, a top priority of the Chief of Naval Operations' unfunded priority list. Increased funding for this research, development, testing, and evaluation will accelerate the installation and deployment of critical ship self-defense improvements. The weapons systems we are developing through this directed energy program will counter rockets, artillery, mortar, and unmanned aerial vehicles for ship and expeditionary base defense, and will ensure the safety of our fighting men and women. Such funding promotes Navy objectives, and the development of directed energy weapons will provide unique capability against emerging asymmetric threats, thereby increasing our Nation's effectiveness on the global war on terror.

Lastly, I would like to discuss the importance of basing our defense budget on 4 percent of GDP, and I hope that we are able to address this in the future as that is one important part of this bill that is lacking.

I would also like to talk about the importance of submarines in our national defense. Assessing the feasibility and cost of actions to maximize the service life and number of Los Angeles class submarines and assessing the attack submarine force structure requirement in the 2009 Quadrennial Defense Review and basing such an assessment on combatant commander requirements are important aspects of this bill. Submarines have been a central component of our naval forces for over a century, and today the submarine helps our Navy conduct numerous operations around the world. Our national defense demands that we have a strong and capable naval fleet, and we must maximize the use of the very capable Los Angeles class submarine and base our force structure on what commanders in the field and on the seas need to accomplish their diverse joint missions. We must keep our number of submarines high, and this aspect of the bill would be a positive step in strengthening our Nation's fighting forces.

I am honored to do my role in supporting the men, women, and equipment of our Nation's military.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. I yield the gentleman 1 additional minute.

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Our military should be able to meet its operational requirements at all priority levels, and I request your support on these important aspects of this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 2 minutes to my good friend, the gentlelady from California (Mrs. CAPPS) for the purposes of a colloquy.

Mrs. CAPPS. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman, I rise to ask for your assistance to help alleviate the shortage of qualified and experienced nurse instructors in the United States, including in the military. Right now, we are told that the limiting factor in increasing the number of nurses to try to head off the looming nurse shortage is the number of faculty available in our nursing schools.

Mr. SKELTON. I thank the gentlelady for raising this very important issue, and assure the gentlelady that I certainly share her concerns. The Department of Defense is facing the same shortage of nurses as we are across the Nation. However, the need for the Department is more directly felt as we are at war, and our military nurses are caring for our wounded and injured in addition to all their other duties.

□ 2115

Let me say to the gentlelady that we have taken serious, substantive steps to increase the number of nurses, both in the military and in the civilian community. In this bill we have mandated the establishment of a Department of Defense School of Nursing, following the successful models of the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences to produce medical doctors, the Interservice Physician Assistant Program to produce physician assistants for the military, and the Army's new School of Social Work, which will enroll its first class this summer.

Although the graduates of the Department of Defense School of Nursing will initially provide much needed care for our troops, I'm confident that following their military service they will continue to serve our Nation as nurses in civilian communities.

Finally, we've included a demonstration project to encourage retired military nurses to become faculty members at civilian schools of nursing to help alleviate the nurse instructor shortage of which you speak.

Mrs. CAPPS. I want to thank the chairman for his excellent leadership in improving health care for our servicemen and women, and especially appreciate his inclusion of a demonstration project in the National Defense Authorization Act.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentlewoman from California has expired.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 30 seconds.

Mrs. CAPPS. Like you, I feel that military nurses are especially equipped to take on the leadership role required of a nurse instructor. We need to ensure that we meet our mutual goal of increasing the capacity of colleges of nursing in order to graduate more nurses who can fill current vacancies that are widespread, both in the military and civilian sectors. I believe that this type of program can be a model for other programs to alleviate shortage of nurse faculty, and would ask the chairman to keep an open mind to other approaches to alleviating the nursing shortage. And I appreciate the urgency created during a time of war.

Mr. SKELTON. Let me assure the gentlelady that we look forward to the results of the demonstration project, and I'm always open of course to practical approaches to address the military nursing shortage.

Mrs. CAPPS. I thank the esteemed chairman for his efforts.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) for the purposes of a colloquy.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Chairman SKELTON, let me thank you for your friendship and for your extraordinary leadership on the Committee on Armed Services. I appreciate your willingness to engage me in the important topic of suicide prevention in our military forces.

As you know, earlier this year, my constituent, Master Sergeant (retired) Christopher Scheuerman, testified before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel about the tragic circumstances surrounding the suicide of his son, Private First Class Jason Drew Scheuerman. Jason was deployed with the 3rd Infantry Division at Forward Operating Base Normandy in Iraq, and died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound from his M16 rifle. Jason showed clear signs of mental distress, but the system failed Jason.

Recent reports indicate the Army suicide rate is the highest in 26 years of record keeping. While there are many outstanding mental health professionals in the Army system, the command structure creates an inherent conflict of interest and a lack of independent objectivity.

Servicemembers are currently allowed a second civilian opinion, but often find it nearly impossible to access an outside mental health provider. I appreciate the fact that this bill addresses the issue of suicide prevention by directing the Secretary to consider how the military can make a second opinion more accessible, including the possibility of providing a second medical evaluation in combat theater by

telephonic evaluation. I know that that is a somewhat controversial suggestion, but we must find a way to stop preventable suicides like Jason Scheuerman. We owe our servicemen and women no less.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to continue to work with you, Chairwoman DAVIS and Ranking Member MCHUGH on this important issue, and I hope that the Secretary will undertake this study immediately so that it is possible for our troubled servicemembers to obtain a second civilian health opinion.

Mr. SKELTON. I thank the gentleman for raising this very important issue. The Department of Defense has made many improvements to its suicide prevention programs, but more can be done. I look forward to working with the gentleman.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman for his time and help.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, we have, I believe, no more speakers left, so at this time let me just say that our ranking members and our chairmen have covered the waterfront of what this bill does. They've taken it from personnel, the pay raise that the chairman started off talking about, the 3.9 percent pay raise, the end strength increases in the Army and Marine Corps, the quality of life increases that we've delivered to our people in uniform, to the equipment side, to the force protection that we are sending additional to Afghanistan and to Iraq, MRAPs, extra armor capability, extra technical capability to be able to defend our forces and help them accomplish the mission, to the modernization side, the platforms that we are building with the modernization part of this budget, to the readiness part of this budget, which is so critical to ongoing operations, and to some of the technical aspects of the budget that I think the Strategic Subcommittee spoke to so effectively, including the programs that involve space, involve missile defense. And so, Mr. Chairman, I think we've described the bill fairly effectively.

And I think also we've described the people. At least I want to make sure we understand how wonderful the people are who put this bill together, not only the ranking members and the chairmen of the subcommittee and our great chairman of the full committee, Ike Skelton, the man from Missouri, but also the wonderful staff that we have that's worked long hours to put together what is a very large bill, in many cases, very technical, and yet they did it with great precision, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Let me just say in my closing seconds here, Mr. Chairman, that I talked about the horizon that I think we face in terms of military challenges. I think that part of that horizon must require a focus on China. The fact that China is now outbuilding the U.S. in submarines by more than 3–1, with their acquisitions from the Russians, it's much more. They're acquiring great technical capability, and they are building an industrial base that, in many areas, such as building warships, could outstrip the United States very quickly in production.

And just as our great chairman mentioned, that it takes more than just a military to win wars and to carry out foreign policy, it's going to take some changes in policy to maintain the United States as a premier military force in the world. Some of those changes are going to require changes in our tax law, in our tariff law that will allow our industrial base to stay in the United States, that will stop these companies that are key to national security who are being advised right now by their financial advisors to move their production offshore, changes in our law that will cause them to stay in the United States, because the environment, the business environment in the United States and the tax environment will be such that they will not be induced to move offshore.

Also, with respect to the hemorrhage of technical information which is going on with the acquisition of American companies on a very selected basis by companies and by nations that are targeting American military technology. This committee has moved toward stopping that hemorrhage by adopting several important provisions with respect to security, site security at companies that do classified information. But there's much more work to be done there, and I know that the committee is moving in that direction and undertaking a great strides in that direction. But that's a direction that's going to require the participation of the entire body, Mr. Chairman, in fact, the entire government. So we have a big challenge ahead of us.

Again, I want to thank the chairman for putting together a bill that passed unanimously out of the Armed Services Committee, and should pass unanimously off the House floor. So once again, a job well done to the gentleman from Missouri.

I would yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Missouri is advised that he has 1 minute remaining.

Mr. SKELTON. I thank the gentleman from California. And I must add that this is properly named for Duncan Hunter in honor of the hard work that you've done through the years. Thank you.

When you put a bill together like this that's $531 billion of taxpayer money for national security, there are unseen hands that have helped glue this together bit by bit and part by part. And that's the unsung but very valuable and absolutely terrific staff of the Armed Services Committee under the direction of Erin Conaton, and I particularly wish to complement her on her hard work. Everyone on this staff is outstanding and an expert in his or her field, and I want them to know that they are appreciated, and that we're very grateful for their work.

This will close out the general debate on this bill. It's an excellent bill, and I think that in truth and fact it has made a great stride toward increasing the readiness of our troops. People in the country should take a great deal of comfort in knowing that there's such bipartisanship on this committee. So I thank the gentleman from California.

I am very, very proud of the members of this committee, the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 5658, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. This legislation authorizes $601.4 billion for defense programs in FY 2009, including $70 billion in emergency funds authorized specifically to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is funding that is critical to our nation's defense, as well as to the troops serving so valiantly in the wars being waged on two fronts.

Thanks in a large part to the leadership of Chairman SKELTON, this legislation provides greater funding than had been requested by the President for equipment depleted by the war in Iraq, including new combat vehicles, new battle gear for the Army National Guard and reserves, military pay raises, and shipbuilding.

H.R. 5658 authorizes $25.4 billion for defense health-care programs, and blocks the president's plan to raise user fees for programs such as Tricare and deductibles for service members and military retirees. This legislation will also authorize an increase of 7,000 active-duty Army personnel, and provide for 5,000 more Marine Corps personnel than current levels.

This legislation also provides for a 3.5 percent pay raise for active duty military, rolls back proposed benefit reductions to spousal benefits, and increases funding for military housing upgraded for bases like Fort Bragg, North Carolina, located in my district.

Mr. Chairman this is a good bill for our troops. It is our duty, our charge as members of this body, to ensure that those who protect and defend our nation in this all-volunteer army receive the best health care, pay, and living conditions that we can provide for them. We owe this to them.

I support this legislation and I would urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank my colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee, specifically my good friend, Representative DUNCAN HUNTER of California, for including a provision in the Fiscal Year 2009 Defense Authorization bill that finally provides for consideration of our Nation's defense industrial base when contracting officials evaluate major Federal defense contract proposals.

Few people are aware that the Pentagon is prevented by law from including defense industrial base considerations when deciding to award a major defense contract. A contract award determination is made primarily by examining which party has the ''best value'' in terms of price, quality, quantity, and delivery. However, how many jobs a particular contract would produce or retain in America or how many suppliers would be able to stay in business in America because of a particular contract is currently not part of the ''best value'' evaluation by the Pentagon. Most believe that

the Buy American Act protects the interests of American workers. However, because of a series of Memorandums of Understanding, MOUs, signed years ago between the Pentagon and other foreign defense agencies, a product can be made completely in Europe and be considered as if made in America and thus compliant with the Buy American Act. In return, U.S. defense articles are supposed to be considered by European procurement officials on the same grounds as European products. However, Europe protected its economic interests in these agreements by including European defense industrial base protections as one criterion in their source selection process. This didn't used to be a problem in the past. However, with the consolidation of major prime defense contractors in the United States and the relatively recent creation of the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company, EADS, there has been more and more conflict in major U.S. defense procurements.

Section 805 of H.R. 5658 seeks to copy Europe's example. It simply allows the Pentagon to consider impacts on the U.S. industrial base during source selection for major defense acquisition programs. This section also authorizes defense acquisition officials to impose penalties on a contractor who misleads the Government regarding potential domestic industrial base impacts.

The bill also asks the Secretary of Defense to notify congressional defense committees at least 30 days before requesting a proposal for any major defense acquisition program that will not use a domestic industrial base evaluation factor during the source selection process. It also includes second and third level suppliers as part of the defense industrial base because the health of this sector of the economy cannot be measured solely by looking at the stock price of the large prime defense contractors.

As someone who voted for every free trade agreement since being elected to Congress in 1992, this section is not protectionism. Back in 1776, Adam Smith argued in his celebrated "Wealth of Nations"; that "(i)t is of importance that the kingdom should depend as little as possible upon its neighbors for the manufactures necessary for its defense." He supported a bounty—or a tax—on the export of British sailcloth and gunpowder to prevent other nations and potential enemies from benefiting from Great Britain's advantage in these products. If the founder of modern-day capitalism and free trade supported an exception to the free flow of trade in defense goods, then domestic sourcing preferences to protect our national security and defense industrial base must be considered consistent with the very foundation of free trade and capitalism.

Congress has a duty to be concerned with our nation's ability to build the weapons and equipment necessary to defend itself. Any argument founded merely on shopping for the best value without considering the larger defense industrial base will leave our great nation exposed and vulnerable. A nation that cannot produce the materials necessary for its defense will eventually become a second-rate power.

Now, some analysts have argued that we should not press for more domestic sourcing of defense articles because Europe and other nations buy more U.S. defense technology that we buy from them. These statistics, however, fail to account for the offsets in defense sales required by other governments, including our friends in Europe.

According to a 2007 report entitled Offsets in Defense Trade prepared by the Bureau of Industry and Security of the Department of Commerce, over 98 percent of all U.S. defense sales to Europe were "offset" from 1993 to 2006. In other words, for every dollar a European government spent on U.S. defense equipment, the U.S. prime defense contractors had to provide 98 cents in industrial compensation arrangements to that government. These compensation arrangements range from requiring re-locating a share of the production of that defense item to that country to marketing that country's goods in the United States. However, the United States is prohibited by law to require of a foreign defense contractor to "offset" part of the cost of the proposed acquisition. thus, our two-way defense trade with Europe is already heavily weighted in their favor.

Finally, Section 805 of H.R. 5658 will not launch a trade war because there have been several occasions in the past when European governments refused to buy from American companies because of their own defense industrial base concerns. In 2003, Pratt & Whitney lost a bid to EuroProp International (EPI) to supply the engine for the A400M European military troop transport plane despite the fact that their initial bid was 20 percent lower, they had a higher quality engine, and they committed to build a new assembly line in Europe and include 75 percent European content in the engine. According to the Financial Times on June 13, 2003, Airbus effectively declared Pratt & Whitney the winner until European governments intervened and promised financial support to EPI so it could drop its price and clinch the deal with a redesigned engine in order to keep all the work in Europe.

Similarly, in 2003, when Italy wanted to build a new fleet of search and rescue helicopters, Skirosky and MD Helicopters were interested in bidding on the contract but were not even given the opportunity. The Italian government decided instead to award the contract without any competition to their national helicopter company—Augusta/Westland—on the grounds of "homeland security."

Mr. Chairman, encouraging the Pentagon to consider the defense industrial base as one factor in their contract decision-making process will help us safeguard over the long-term the knowledge and innovation that make our defense industry the best in the world. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5658 and, in particular, Section 805, throughout the legislative process.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. All time for general debate has expired.

Under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut) having assumed the chair, Mr. ELLISON, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5658) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2009 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2009, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLISON). The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 1137.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1137.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING THE USE OF THE CAPITOL GROUNDS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SPECIAL OLYMPICS LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and agreeing to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 309.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 309.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 2130

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and agreeing to the resolution, H. Res. 339, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 339, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF BICYCLING IN TRANSPORTATION AND RECREATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on