

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I am disappointed that we are about to begin the 2010 fiscal year having enacted just one appropriations bill. I am even more disappointed that we passed a continuing resolution, airdropped into the Legislative Branch appropriations bill, that provides money to continue the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While I am pleased that the President has committed to withdrawing our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011, this redeployment schedule is too long and may undermine our ability to combat al-Qaida while straining our Armed Forces unnecessarily. In addition, while the President is right to focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan, I remain concerned that his strategy for those countries does not adequately address, and may even exacerbate, the threats to our national security we face in Pakistan.

We need to keep the Federal Government operating and make sure our brave troops get all the equipment and supplies they need, but we should not be providing funds to continue those wars without, at a minimum, engaging in a serious debate about their effects on our national security.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the concurrent resolution is agreed to and the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 191) was agreed to.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until the hour of 6:30 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 5:40 p.m., recessed until 6:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BEGICH).

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3326, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3326), making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McCain amendment No. 2558, to strike amounts available for procurement of C-17 aircraft in excess of the amount requested by the President in the budget for fiscal year 2010 and to make such amounts available instead for operation and maintenance in accordance with amounts requested by the President in that budget and for Operation and Maintenance, Army, for overseas contingency operations.

AMENDMENT NO. 2558

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 2558 offered by the Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I again quote from a letter from the Secretary of Defense:

The President's defense budget request has requested no additional C-17s. This position is based on the Department's firm judgment that we have acquired a sufficient number of C-17s to meet the Nation's military needs. . . . More specifically, the \$2.5 billion it will cost to purchase 10 additional C-17s plus the \$100 million per year it will cost to operate them will invariably result in a reduction in critical warfighting capabilities somewhere else in the defense program.

I understand there will be a budget point of order. I wish to tell my colleagues we will be voting up or down on this issue because if this is defeated, I will have another amendment simply to kill this unneeded, unnecessary porkbarrel exercise in the power of lobbyists in our Nation's Capital.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I am prepared to go right to the heart of the underlying amendment rather than go through this point of order, but let me just point out that there are those who have supported a provision in the fiscal year 2010 Defense Authorization bill that would prohibit the Defense Department from retiring the 40-year-old C-5As. These are the people who are now promoting this amendment to kill the C-17. In effect, the proponents of the McCain amendment are tying the hands of the Air Force, by requiring the Pentagon to upkeep a fleet of C-5s—aircraft that are outdated, costly to operate, and are less capable than the C-17. The Air Force should be allowed to replace them with C-17s and not be forced to waste hundreds of millions of dollars to extend the life of the C-5.

It is less costly to build a C-17 than it is to repair a C-5. That is the reality. If we are looking for cost savings and deficit reduction, then what the committee has advocated actually makes more sense fiscally to do. But instead, the McCain amendment in effect promotes a 40-year-old aircraft, getting older by the day, rather than an aircraft like the C-17 that has the capability of landing almost anywhere on the globe for that matter, highly versatile.

We have nearly 100,000 new troops who have been added to our armed services in 4 years. We need to have an airlift capacity that meets our larger force's needs. I urge the rejection of the McCain amendment.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise today to express my continued support for the C-17 cargo aircraft program and urge my colleagues to retain funding for 10 additional aircraft in the fiscal year 2010 Defense appropriations bill.

The C-17 is critical to our national security and our ability to efficiently carry out important missions around the world. Not only is this aircraft an indispensable asset in supporting military and humanitarian missions in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan; it has a proven record of

versatility and high performance, and it sustains jobs that are essential across 43 States—including my home State of California.

First, I would like to talk about the types of missions where we use the C-17. According to the Air Force budget justification for 2010, the C-17 "is a major element of America's National Military Strategy and constitutes the most responsive means of meeting U.S. mobility requirements. . . . The C-17 will perform the airlift mission well into this century."

The C-17 is essential to our missions in Iraq and Afghanistan particularly because of its versatility. It is used to transport equipment, supplies and our service members. For example, the C-17 can land on a dirt runway to deliver needed supplies in remote regions of Afghanistan.

We also use the C-17 to evacuate our wounded men and women from Iraq to Germany, and then back to the United States for treatment. And in some instances, it has even been used to transport our service members across a combat zone, reducing the risks that they face when they travel on land by convoy.

And the uses don't stop there. The C-17 is used to deliver humanitarian supplies. In January of this year, a C-17 delivered 18,000 pounds of supplies to Nicaragua, one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere.

The C-17 has also been used to bring relief to Americans, including during Hurricane Katrina. It can deliver a 100-bed, fully equipped hospital to nearly any area with an unimproved airstrip.

This is an amazing capability, and one we cannot afford to lose.

Second, the C-17 has a proven record of performance. Quite simply, it is the workhorse of our military. And we are using them at a much higher rate than the Air Force originally intended.

C-17s have flown over 1.3 million flight hours since 2002. Many are flown at 150–180 percent of their anticipated flight hours.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the C-17 was designed to fly 1,000 hours per year over 30 years, but the fleet has averaged 1,250 hours per aircraft over the last ten years. Some have even reached 2,400 flying hours in a single year.

And finally, the C-17 is the last strategic airlift production line in the Nation. Every day 30,000 employees from 43 states go to work in direct support of the C-17. In addition to those 30,000 direct jobs, over 100,000 workers depend on this production line. In my home State of California, 13,800 people work on the C-17. And 19,200 workers have an affiliation with this aircraft.

Too many American jobs depend on this vital program. Before we take any action to shut down the line, we must be absolutely certain that we have all of the aircraft we need.

We cannot take the chance that we "may" have enough aircraft, particularly without reviewing two studies that are due by the end of the year.