

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ISTOOK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. CLAYTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

VETERANS TRANSITIONAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FOX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to address my colleagues on two important veterans issues.

There is a national veterans problem. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, approximately one in three homeless Americans are military veterans, an estimated 250,000 men and women.

According to VA reports, homeless veterans overwhelmingly suffer from serious psychiatric or substance abuse disorders. Numerous studies have shown that destructive, addictive behavior and homelessness are inexorably linked. Chemical dependency, post-traumatic stress disorder and chronic physical problems affect a high percentage of homeless veterans. Approximately 75 percent of homeless veterans have a problem with alcohol and drugs, a rate of abuse higher than their nonvet counterparts, according to providers of services to homeless veterans.

A shortfall of transitional housing for homeless veterans exists because Federal programs targeted specifically at these veterans currently serve only a fraction of those in need. To accommodate an estimated 250,000 homeless veterans, the VA has fewer than 5,000 transitional-type beds under contract or as part of its domiciliary program for homeless veterans.

Our House Committee on Veterans' Affairs believes the most effective method of reducing the revolving door syndrome plaguing the VA health care system is to ensure that veterans are being discharged to residences offering a highly structured, long-term housing program that requires sobriety, accountability and assistance in finding employment.

The solution, Mr. Speaker, can be found in the Veterans Transitional

Housing Opportunities Act, which I am proud to say that the House overwhelmingly voted for yesterday. This bill establishes a pilot program at the Department of Veterans Affairs to guarantee loans to community-based organizations that serve homeless veterans.

The intent of the bill is to expand the supply of transitional housing for homeless veterans by authorizing the Veterans Affairs Secretary to guarantee loans for long-term transitional housing projects. I urge the U.S. Senate to take quick action to approve this important bill, and I thank the chairman, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), for his hard work in bringing this bill to the floor and authoring same.

I also bring to the attention of my House colleagues, Mr. Speaker, the fact that we have approved wisely the Obey motion to make sure that we reject any cuts in veterans' benefits, including protection, tonight, of service-connected disability compensation to veterans for tobacco-related illnesses. We stand tonight by voting overwhelmingly, almost unanimously, for this amendment, which will make sure we do protect our veterans. And it has been recognized with favor by the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, and other service-related organizations.

I know this takes a step in the right direction for our veterans, and I congratulate the House again in taking two steps forward this week for our veterans, the men and women who have served our country so gallantly.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. There is going to be a special order on behalf of my very good friend, Terry Sanford, led by the gentleman from North Carolina. Unfortunately, I cannot stay, but I appreciate the gentleman from Pennsylvania giving me this opportunity to ask unanimous consent that my remarks be included in the record immediately following the remarks of the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. Sanford, Governor Sanford, was a very close friend of mine. I was one of those young people that came into politics when he was one of our most significant leaders. He was the governor of North Carolina.

He was a courageous governor of North Carolina at a difficult time and brought great credit to his State and great credit to our Nation. And I am pleased to join my friends from North Carolina in honoring this courageous, committed American who, as I said, brought great credit to North Carolina, brought great credit to his country, and was a human being who represented the very best that America had to offer.

I thank my friend from Pennsylvania for giving me that opportunity.

NEW APPROACH NEEDED IN NAGORNO KARABAGH PEACE PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about a continuing concern for our Nation's foreign policy, and that is maintaining our close ties with the Republic of Armenia and the need for a negotiated settlement in Nagorno Karabagh. I am afraid the U.S. negotiating position in this conflict has gotten seriously off track, and I am hoping that recent events will create momentum to get us in the right direction.

As I have mentioned in this House on several occasions, the people of Nagorno Karabagh fought and won a war of independence against Azerbaijan. A cease-fire has been in place since 1994, but it has been shaky at best.

The U.S. has been involved in a major way in the negotiations intended to produce a just and lasting peace. Our country is a co-chair of the international negotiating group formed to seek a solution to the Nagorno Karabagh conflict along with France and Russia. But, unfortunately, the U.S. position has sided with Azerbaijan's claim of so-called "territorial integrity", despite the fact that this land has been Armenian land for centuries, and the borders which gave the land to Azerbaijan were imposed by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

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Last week, international mediators from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, traveled to Armenia's capital of Yerevan to discuss the new Armenian government's position on the Nagorno Karabagh conflict. The American, Russian and French Armenia's negotiators heard Armenia's new foreign minister, Vartan Oskanian, reiterate Armenia's opposition to the OSCE peace plan, which calls for a phased solution to the dispute. Foreign Minister Oskanian called for a resumption of face-to-face talks between the parties to the conflict, Karabagh and Azerbaijan, without preconditions.

Mr. Speaker, in late March, the people of Armenia elected Robert Kocharian as their president. Mr. Kocharian, who actually hails from Karabagh, has insisted that the OSCE plan is essentially a non-starter since it fails to guarantee Karabagh's security and self-determination. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the previous Armenian government of President Levon Ter-Petrosian fell largely because the former President had publicly come out in support of the highly unpopular and unworkable OSCE plan, after considerable pressure from the United States I might add.

Unfortunately, it appears that we have not learned our lesson. The U.S. is still sticking to the original, unworkable plan. Worse still, I am afraid we may be trying to pressure Armenian and Karabagh into going along with this plan, suggesting that there could be repercussions from the U.S. This is clearly the wrong way to deal with the government of a friendly country like Armenia, particularly when that government is merely standing up for the legitimate security concerns of its people.

The recent change of government in Armenia affords an excellent opportunity for us to offer a new approach to the Karabagh conflict, one that recognizes the need for long-term, ironclad security arrangements and full self-determination for the people of Karabagh. I am concerned that the U.S. and our OSCE partners are taking their cue from the government of Azerbaijan, which has refused to budge. But the bottom line is that Azerbaijan will not budge until the United States and the international community force it to negotiate in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned about the failure thus far to deliver the U.S. aid to Nagorno Karabagh that has been promised and appropriated. In 1998, the Foreign Operations appropriation bill provided for the first time direct aid to Karabagh in the amount of \$12.5 million for humanitarian needs. The humanitarian infrastructure needs in Karabagh are severe, as I have witnessed firsthand.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it is not clear that any aid has yet been provided to Karabagh. At a hearing two weeks ago of the House Committee on International Relations, officials testified that aid would soon be provided to Karabagh but would be disbursed by a non-governmental organization that would have broad discretion over how the aid was spent. Furthermore, it appears that the State Department does not intend to spend the entire \$12.5 million in Karabagh itself, although that is what was intended by Congress. Several of my colleagues are also pressing for the aid to be spent in Karabagh, as Congress intended, and we plan to keep up that pressure.

While working to get the aid that has already been appropriated to its intended recipients in Karabagh, I am also urging the Foreign Ops Subcommittee to build upon its historic achievement in the FY 1998 bill to earmark assistance to Nagorno Karabagh at \$20 million and make it even more clear that the aid is intended for disbursement within that Nagorno Karabagh. I also urge that aid to Armenia be increased and not decreased, as the Administration has proposed.

Armenia is making great progress in terms of democracy in free markets. We should not back out of that commitment now that our investment in democracy in this former Soviet Republic is bearing fruit and particularly not if the intent is to use the aid as a

form of leverage against Armenia and Karabagh in the stalled peace talks.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to again stress the importance of maintaining the current ban on direct government aid to Azerbaijan until this country lifts its blockade of Armenia and Karabagh. This ban was enacted as part of the Freedom Support Act of 1992, it is good law. Now, Congress is reexamining the issue of the prohibition on aid to Azerbaijan.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday postponed a markup on legislation known as the Silk Road Strategy Act. I think that that legislation should not be passed, because we do not want to see a repeal of section 907.

The House International Relations Committee is soon expected to consider similar legislation. While ostensibly an effort to enhance U.S. engagement in the region, the purpose of the bill seems now more than ever to be an attempt to repeal Section 907.

Mr. Speaker, for the ban on aid to be lifted, Azerbaijan need only lift its blockades of Armenia and Karabagh. Until then, there should be no consideration of asking U.S. taxpayers to support the dictatorship in Baku.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, as we prepare for a load of speeches that most of us will be giving on Monday, it is important to think about the debate which has taken place today on the Defense Authorization Act.

The issues raised during the debate on amendments to the Defense Authorization Act, as I said, which involve the relationship between the United States and China, are some of the most deeply troubling that I have witnessed since I have had the privilege of serving here in the Congress. And make no mistake about it, the long-term bilateral relationship between the United States of America and China is very serious business.

We are talking about the world's leading democracy and only superpower and the world's fastest growing and most populous nation. This may be the most important bilateral relationship in the world. We have a responsibility to make every effort to craft a strong and stable bilateral relationship that is built on positive economic and political reforms in China.

Mr. Speaker, success is critical to our future. Now, our Constitution places in the executive branch, in the

presidency, the responsibility to first and foremost protect our Nation's security. As the Commander in Chief and executor of foreign relations, there is no substitute for the President on foreign policy.

During the past two administrations, I have worked long and hard on a bipartisan basis to help craft policies toward China which promote more stable relations based on free market reforms and the seedlings of democratic progress in that country.

What is so troubling today is that very serious, Mr. Speaker, disturbingly serious charges are being leveled at the current administration which cut to the very heart of the fitness of the administration to carry out a sound China policy. The first and foremost responsibility of the executive branch of the President is to protect national security. Nobody else can do that, Mr. Speaker, not American businesses and not other foreign entities.

The key events in question do not seem to be in dispute. We know that for years a number of American firms that construct and use satellites have desired to use Chinese launch vehicles, Chinese rockets. They have used them because they are cheaper and more available. The big problem has been that they are very unreliable. Those rockets blow up too often, destroying their expensive satellite cargo. This, obviously, can be a big problem.

In the spring of 1996, a Chinese rocket blew up that was carrying such a satellite. It is reported that the insurance companies responsible for the \$200 million satellite destroyed by the rocket failure essentially told their American satellite customers to either improve the reliability of Chinese launch vehicles or find new launch sources. It is reported that the U.S. companies proceeded to help improve the launch vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, this assistance raised very, very serious red flags at the Department of Defense and the Department of State about the prospect that this assistance would likely help improve Chinese ballistic missiles, a clear national security concern.

The key fact is that over the course of 2 years, an internal debate raged within the administration between the economic benefits to a few companies being able to use better Chinese launch vehicles and clear national security warnings from within the Defense and State Departments. Added to the mix are a blizzard of campaign contributions to the President's campaign from the corporate interests involved.

Mr. Speaker, while no pun is intended, it does not take a rocket scientist to recognize that better Chinese satellite launch vehicles will result in better Chinese ballistic missiles. The fact that it appears that the administration chose the financial benefits of some companies over a clear national security concern is very troubling. The fact that such large campaign sums may have had an impact on the decision is even more disturbing.