

CONGRATULATING THE 22D AIR REFUELING WING, McCONNELL AFB, WICHITA, KS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the Men and Women of the 22d Air Refueling Wing at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kansas. The crew at the 22d won recognition as the top KC-135 maintenance team in the world at a recent competition known as the Air Mobility Rodeo. This is an event sponsored by the Air Mobility Command. It is an accomplishment that requires skill, training, leadership, teamwork, pride, professionalism and unselfish dedication to the task at hand. I take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge their great success and professionalism.

The Air Mobility Rodeo is a binational, multinational event that is designed to develop and improve techniques and procedures that enhance air mobility operations—something that is very crucial in today's world. In this year's competition at McCord Air Force Base, the participants included more than 2,500 competitors formed in 80 teams from over 300 active duty Air Force, Air Force Reserve command, Air National Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Army, and other Allied Nations. Winning this award is an important event worthy of real recognition. What also makes this such an important win is that for the 22d, it is a repeat win for this team. They walked away with the prize in the 1996 competition as well. And this leads me to say there is no question that the KC-135 aircraft at McConnell are the best maintained in the world.

Let me acknowledge the leadership at Team McConnell because without their leadership and guidance, the atmosphere at McConnell would never support the effort required to win this competition. The two key players are the Wing Commander, Col. Michael C. Gould, and the Senior Enlisted Advisor, Chief Master Sergeant Herbert V. Williams, Jr. Anyone who has been around the military understands how much the senior leadership of an organization sets the tone for the entire command.

There is one other member of the team whose contribution I want to recognize. That member is Lead Crew Chief, Sergeant Jeffery Gass. He was singled out for special recognition and was selected as Air Mobility Command's Crew Chief of the year.

It is men and women such as Sgt. Gass who make our military the most successful in the world. They are the unsung heroes—quietly working in the background, exceptionally professional, dedicated to their service and their nation, and serving the communities where they are stationed. The award nomination for Sgt. Gass is testimony to his unselfish dedication, his professional knowledge, and his service to his country and the local community.

I am particularly proud to recognize this team from McConnell Air Force

Base and Sgt. Gass not only because they contribute so much to the defense of our nation but because they contribute so much to Wichita and Kansas. Well done to the 22nd Air Refueling Wing and well done to Sgt. Gass.

#### THE MARINE ACTION IN CENTCOM FOR NEO OPERATIONS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to compliment the men and women of our sea services, the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Navy, on an operation recently conducted. It was about a month ago in the African country of Eritrea. I think we should all be very proud of the way the Navy and the Marine Corps team responded to what I refer to as a 911 call, to execute an evacuation operation, commonly called a NEO, in that part of the world in Africa. It resulted from the unrest that this country, Eritrea, has had with its neighbor, Ethiopia. Let me highlight the action as it unfolded.

On the evening of the June 5 of this year, the marines and sailors of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, part of a forward-deployed Amphibious Ready Group, received what is called a warning order. A warning order is a "heads up" that a specific tasking is about to come your way and you had better start thinking about the mission that is contained in the warning order. That mission was the removal of American citizens from Eritrea because of the increasing unrest, as I have indicated, with Ethiopia. The marines, who had just finished conducting an exercise in Jordan, began their preparations right off the bat.

At 3:30 in the afternoon of the 6th of June, the commanding officer, Colonel T.L. Moore, as ordered by General Anthony Zinni, the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Central Command, launched two C-130 aircraft along with 30 marines and sailors from this expeditionary unit. They arrived in Asmara, Eritrea, and began removing U.S. citizens and personnel from other countries. At 11:50 p.m., on that same day, the mission was complete.

What mission?

These superb marines and sailors removed from harm's way, and to safety, 105 American citizens, 24 Norwegians, 20 who were British, 8 Canadians, 3 Ethiopians, 3 Japanese, 1 Korean, 1 Mexican, and 1 Swedish civilian. I am told the C-130s were proudly flying the Stars and Stripes in regards to this mission instead of their usual command banner strictly as a matter of pride in their mission and their nation.

Also as part of this continuing effort, the U.S.S. Tarawa got underway at 3 p.m. on the 6th and steamed at full speed to the coast of Eritrea to wait for any further requests for NEO assistance in case any more problems did, simply, come up.

I think the remarkable thing about the Tarawa is that the ship did actually prepare for this mission and got underway in less than 72 hours.

There was not any fanfare in the press about this. There were no stories in the media about the successful effort or pride of our men and women involved in this important mission. I think probably too many times the only military stories we hear about are some isolated event involving a service member that creates a negative headline, or some controversial issue, like today we are hearing over the media that somehow or other we are going to lessen or keep or improve or make more stringent the rules of the military in regards to adultery.

I just wanted to take this opportunity to share this mission with my colleagues because it reflects, I think, the pride and the professionalism that is the standard of the vast majority of the members of our Armed Forces. It is so infrequent that we in the Congress really salute these fine Americans.

So, Semper Fi and Bravo Zulu to the men and women of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, the U.S.S. Tarawa, and all other members of our Corps and Navy involved in this effort.

#### U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN KOSOVO

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I want to call to the attention of my colleagues some headlines that are in today's press in reference to the problems that we are experiencing, the challenge we face, what could be a real tragedy in Kosovo. As I look at this, here is a headline from the Washington Post, as of this morning, written by R. Jeffrey Smith of the Post foreign service: "Thousands Flee As Lawlessness Spreads In Kosovo." And it gives an up-front and personal account in regards to a particular Albanian citizen who has lived there for 40 years and was beaten in the middle of the night, and what is going on in that country.

Here is another headline from the Washington Times as of today, by Philip Smucker of the Washington Times: "Kosovar Rebels Grow Bolder."

A grimy-faced teenager with bloodshot eyes and an automatic rifle ran at us, screaming, as we came down a hill into the heart of a raging firefight yesterday, on the bloodiest weekend of the Kosovo war.

Here is another headline from the European Stars and Stripes: "Fighting Flares In Kosovo."

From the New York Times: "Rebels Claim First Capture Of Kosovo City."

Last week I had an intelligence briefing on Kosovo. They indicated if this happened, in regards to Pristina, and also in regards to Orahovac—I am having a little trouble with the pronunciation, but it is indicative of many of the communities there. So we have the fighting that has actually spread.

Here is another article from the European Stars and Stripes: "SFOR Patrols Bosnian Border for Gun-Running." That is the situation in Bosnia. Of course right down from Bosnia, we have the situation in regards to Kosovo.

I am concerned about this because I think the United States and the rest of

our allies in Western Europe are on the verge of a deep and expensive and very dangerous involvement in yet another area of the Balkans. Unfortunately, and once again, I have yet to hear from the executive, and from the administration—more especially the President—to explain to the Congress nor, more important, the American people, why is this in our vital national interest to get in the middle of this growing conflict.

I think I can make a pretty good case in that regard, because I just returned from the three new prospective NATO countries—Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary—with the distinguished chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator SHELBY. To a person, every official whom we met with in those three countries indicated that what NATO does with regard to Kosovo and what we continue to do in Bosnia is the real test of NATO: What it will be; what it will do; what our involvement will be; if, in fact, we have a Palestinian kind of situation in the middle of Europe with Bosnia and Kosovo; whether or not we can end this kind of ethnic strife.

So I think you could probably make a case for our involvement in Kosovo, but I have yet to hear from anybody in the administration other than reacting to news accounts or to questions. I think it is time we heard.

On the other side of it, we don't want to back into a situation where there is no end in sight, no exit strategy, and no real consideration in terms of cost and involvement.

The media reports are very clear that the Yugoslavian leader, Mr. Milosevic, is taking very hard and brutal action against the ethnic Albanians who are living in Kosovo. They comprise 90 percent of the population. This is the same kind of activity that he promoted in regards to Bosnia and the breakup there.

We are making some diplomatic efforts. We have people there working overtime, but these efforts seem to keep changing. We have drawn several lines in the sand with threats of severe reprisals if the Serbian action against the Albanian population does not cease, and those lines in the sand are still there, they have been gone over, and the activity continues. So much for any kind of believability in regards to our commitment.

The Albanian rebels, known as the KLA, are simply growing in strength and the fighting is growing more fierce. There is no real peaceful solution in sight. The United States and NATO have threatened military action and they have had a military demonstration. It was a fly-over or fly-by. It was called "Determined Falcon." I really don't know how determined that falcon is, but neither side has offered to end the conflict and efforts to bring them to the table to get a solution have failed. In fact, the KLA is really, I think, buoyed by the apparent Western support for their cause. Obviously,

they are not interested in backing off now.

Mr. Milosevic, having observed our unwillingness to carry out our threats in the past, and coupled with the strong support of the Serbian people to put an end to the rebel uprising in Kosovo, has no reason to back off, either. So we have a standoff.

We have now started an international monitoring program in Kosovo "aimed at bringing peace to this strife-torn region."

Mr. President, I want everybody to understand this. This is a very important development. This observer group is comprised of about 40 diplomats and "military experts" attached to embassies in Belgrade. Our "military experts" are unarmed U.S. military forces from the European Command. This means we have U.S. personnel now in this kind of a situation.

I was reading press reports about it several days ago, and they are in white cars, very clearly marked. You hope, obviously, the white cars will be very clearly marked so they will avoid any kind of hostilities. In other words, if you are traveling in a white car and either side wants to do great mischief—and that is probably not the right word for it—why certainly, obviously, they would be highlighted.

I have several concerns, Mr. President, about all of this: We are, once again, backing into a military commitment in regard to Kosovo. The term of "unarmed military observers or experts" certainly brings back some memories of other situations where we have backed into those conflicts. It is *deja vu* all over again. We are running a great risk that our "military experts" or diplomats could be in harm's way.

NATO is conducting contingency planning that could involve thousands of military troops to separate the warring factions or impose peace. I must tell you, in talking to a British general at the ceremony celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Berlin airlift, when I was talking about this, I asked the general, "How many people would it take to really maintain order on that border?" And there have been estimates of anywhere from 7,000 to 25,000. It is very difficult terrain.

He said, "Oh, my no, it would take upwards of 70,000."

"Seventy thousand?" My mouth, obviously, dropped a little bit.

He said, "Of course, we don't intend on doing that." But, of course, then we didn't intend on doing that in other rather political involvements of gradualism that we have had around the world, and I am not going to spell those out in specific terms. I think everybody here knows what we are talking about. So we have those contingency plans that could involve thousands of military troops.

The costs, both in dollars and the impact on our already-stressed military, are potentially very devastating. I remember the briefing that we had in re-

gard to India and Pakistan, and our esteemed Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was talking about the related situation in regard to Kosovo and indicated that we might have to become much more involved there.

Senator STEVENS, the distinguished chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said, "Wait a minute, we do not have the money, we do not have the funds, we do not have the materiel, we do not have the men and women in uniform to get the job done. We are already committed in the gulf. We are already committed in Bosnia. Most of those funds in the past have been taken out of the readiness account—we are not paying for it—and that is a real problem." I think the Senator's sense of urgency in his response to the Secretary was well taken.

There are many unanswered questions on how this conflict in Kosovo is in our vital national interest. Let me stress vital national interest. I do think it is in the best interest of NATO. I think we have to be very careful; I think we have to be very firm.

Senator LIEBERMAN, the distinguished Senator from Connecticut, and the former distinguished majority leader in the Senate and my colleague and longtime friend, Bob Dole, indicated we must take aggressive and very positive action. There are unexplained scenarios of Kosovo leading to a larger war in Europe if this conflict is not ended now.

But my primary concern in bringing this up, Mr. President, is this: This whole issue has yet to be addressed by the President and, for that matter, to some extent by this Congress in any way. Yet, here we are backing into a situation with "military observers" and with contingency plans that could involve thousands more. The President should not, nor will the Congress let him, commit the men and women of our Armed Forces without defining our national interests. That is fundamental, and I think we ought to spell that out. I call for the President to do so and to outline the objectives in the exit strategy for any involvement in that part of the world and in regard to Kosovo in particular.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, July 17, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,532,637,423,771.79 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-two billion, six hundred