

Few doubt that Al Qaeda does not possess large quantities of Russian SA7s and even more effective U.S. Stingers. A successful attack against a Boeing 747-400 with full capacity could cost almost five hundred lives. Aside from large-scale casualties, such a successful attack would have a devastating impact on the U.S. Aircraft industry, on travel and tourism, and on the entire economy. It would be a multifaceted catastrophe.

Now that we understand that pleas are vulnerable, the United States Government must take every step to protect and defend American citizens. The advanced technology needed to protect American commercial airplanes exists and is operation on U.S. military transports. The new system are advanced and are much more successful than the previous system of diversionary flares. The most modern systems, such as those installed on U.S. C17s and C5As, identify when a plane is threatened, detect the source of the threat, jam the guidance system of the incoming missiles and steer it off its flight path. Similar systems are currently used on low-altitude military aircrafts.

The rapid deployment of this system is essential for the safety of U.S. commercial flyers and is the clear responsibility of the U.S. Government to implement. I propose fully funding the retrofitting of SAM defensive systems and beginning that process this year.

No one in this body would question that preserving and protecting the people of the United States is our most important and sacred constitutional responsibility. At this critical time in our Nation's history we have two simultaneous crises and concerns: national security and economic security. The bill I introduce today addresses both of these issues. This legislation would take the preventive step of reducing risk to millions of travelers and create thousands of jobs through the retrofitting of the defensive technologies.

Additionally, this bill will boost our airline industry. Recent surveys have shown that between one-fifth to one-third of Americans are restricting their flying because of fears of terrorism. Our government and the airline industry are working closely together to restore full consumer confidence in the safety of our commercial air system. Implementing a robust and effective defense system for our commercial jet fleet would further accelerate the process of making Americans feel safer when they fly, and help the economic recovery of U.S. air carriers. The estimated cost of \$10.2 billion for a system of 6,800 commercial jets at a unit price of \$1.5 million will be offset by these economic benefits. The unit cost could drop even lower in mass production.

Mr. Speaker, I fully realize that a ten billion expenditure is significant. But it is not prohibitive. The only thing that would be prohibitive would be for this Congress to be negligent in our responsibility to protect the people of our great Nation. Let us not gather together in grief the morning after a catastrophe and wonder what we could have done to prevent it. We know what can be done. Let's do it.

HOPE PLUS SCHOLARSHIP ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2003

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Hope Plus Scholarship Act, which extends

the HOPE scholarship tax credit to K-12 education expenses. Under this bill, parents could use the HOPE Scholarship to pay for private or religious school tuition or to offset the cost of home schooling. In addition, under the bill, all Americans could use the Hope Scholarship to make cash or in-kind donations to public schools. Thus, the Hope Scholarship could help working parents finally afford to send their child to a private school, while other parents could take advantage of the Hope credit to help purchase new computers for their children's school. I urge my colleagues to join with me in returning education resources to the American people by cosponsoring my Hope Plus Scholarship Act.

INTRODUCTION OF INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE ACT

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 5, 2003

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the International Environmental Defense Act of 2003.

The purpose of this bill is to clarify the authority of the Secretary of Defense to respond to environmental emergencies. It is cosponsored by my colleagues from Colorado, Representative Joel Hefley. I greatly appreciate his support.

In times of natural disaster or other emergencies, the United States for decades has come to the aid of those in need—whether the crisis is the result of an earthquake in Turkey, an erupting volcano in South America, or deadly floods in some other part of the world.

When the need arises, the U.S. Government provides humanitarian assistance through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the State Department, the Defense Department, and other federal agencies. It also contracts with private voluntary agencies to provide such assistance and coordinates the U.S. response with that of other countries.

The American military has an outstanding record of participation in these activities. All Americans take pride in the humanitarian assistance provided by the men and women of our armed services.

I strongly support this policy. It is the right thing to do, and in the best interests of our country as well as of people everywhere. Humanitarian assistance is critical to help communities or regions or whole countries recover from devastating natural or man-made events.

But global emergencies come in other forms as well—including environmental emergencies such as oil or chemical spills or other similar occurrences. They may not have the immediate impact on people of homes destroyed in an earthquake or of crops lost to drought. But by polluting waterways, killing fish or other species, or contaminating the air, water, or land, environmental disasters can have devastating effects on the health and well-being of people, wildlife, and ecosystems.

So, wherever they occur, environmental emergencies have the potential to affect the national interest of the United States. And our government—including our military forces—should have the same ability to respond as in the case of other emergencies.

Current law authorizes the Department of Defense to use its funds for the transport of humanitarian relief, allowing U.S. military personnel to help provide foreign countries with emergency assistance such as helicopter transport, temporary water supplies, and road and bridge repair. For example, U.S. military personnel were part of the U.S. response to Hurricane Mitch in Central America and recent earthquakes in El Salvador and India.

But when it comes to environmental emergencies, under current law the military now has less ability to help. Those are the situations that are addressed by the bill I am introducing today.

The International Environmental Defense Act would fill a gap in current law so U.S. military transport could be used not only for humanitarian, but also for environmental emergencies. The bill does not require that this be done—but it would authorize the Defense Department to do so, just as current law authorizes but does not require the transport of humanitarian assistance to respond to other emergencies.

As an illustration of the limitations of the current law, consider a recent case about which I have first-hand knowledge.

In 2001, there was a very serious oil spill in the Pacific Ocean that threatened to contaminate the Galapagos Islands. The government of Ecuador and people everywhere were very concerned that this could imperil the world-famous wildlife of the islands and the rest of that unique ecosystem. They hastened to organize a response.

As part of that response, the Ecuadorian Government was in contact with a company in Colorado that makes a product to absorb oil from sea water. But complications arose, and the company contacted my office to see if we could help resolve them.

As we explored the situation, we learned that while the government of Ecuador was interested in acquiring the Colorado company's product, they also wanted to arrange for the United States to transport it to Ecuador by military aircraft, because that would be quicker and cheaper than other alternatives. But when we contacted the Defense Department to see if there was a possibility that could be arranged, we learned about the limitations of current law. In short, we learned that while military transport might be possible to provide humanitarian relief, that option was not available to respond to an environmental emergency.

The bill I am introducing today would change that—not by requiring the military to provide transport in such a case, but by providing that option in case the U.S. Government should decide it would be appropriate. Perhaps this would have been useful authority for the military to have when the Prestige broke up off the northwest coast of Spain in November 2002.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a far-reaching bill. But I think it would provide useful authority for our country to respond to environmental problems that, ultimately, can affect us and the rest of the world.