

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 257

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the responsibility of the United States to ensure that the Panama Canal will remain open and secure to vessels of all nations.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 10, 2000

Mr. CRAIG (for himself, Mr. INHOFE, Mrs. HUTCHISON, and Mr. CRAPO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the responsibility of the United States to ensure that the Panama Canal will remain open and secure to vessels of all nations.

Whereas the 1977 Treaty Concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal provides that Panama and the United States have the joint responsibility to ensure that the Panama Canal will remain open and secure, and provides that each signatory, in accordance with its constitutional processes, shall defend the Canal against any threat to its neutrality and shall have the right to act against threats against the peaceful transit of vessels through the Canal;

Whereas the United States Armed Forces have depended upon the Panama Canal for rapid transit in times of global conflict, including during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Persian Gulf War;

Whereas the common interests of Panama and the United States have produced close relations between the two nations and a shared interest in protecting the Canal and its operations;

Whereas the passage of Panama Law Number 5 and the port facilities lease agreements have created concern about the future security of the Canal and its continued unfettered operations;

Whereas Panama does not have an army, navy, or air force, and the national police capabilities are inadequate to defend the Canal against terrorism from internal or external sources;

Whereas occupation, damage, or destruction of this crucial naval choke point would be catastrophic to the United States, its allies, and the world;

Whereas the Canal has influenced world trade patterns, spurred growth in developed countries, and has been a primary impetus for economic expansion in developing countries;

Whereas the Panama Canal remains a vital economic and strategic asset to the United States, its allies, and the world; and

Whereas 53 percent of Canal traffic originates or ends at United States port facilities: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

1 (1) any attack on or against the Panama Canal
2 by any country will be considered an act of war
3 against the United States;

4 (2) the President should, prior to June 1, 2001,
5 negotiate security arrangements with the Govern-
6 ment of Panama that will protect the Canal and en-
7 sure that the Canal remains open, secure, and neu-
8 tral, consistent with the Panama Canal Treaty, the
9 Treaty Concerning the Permanent Neutrality and
10 Operation of the Panama Canal, and the resolutions
11 of ratification thereto; and

12 (3) the President should consult with the lead-
13 ership of both Houses of Congress and with the
14 chairmen and ranking members of the appropriate
15 congressional committees regarding the implementa-
16 tion of this resolution.

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