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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. PETRI].

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

September 8, 1997

I hereby designate the Honorable THOMAS E. PETRI to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. McDevitt, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2159. An act making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 2159) "An Act making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes," requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. GREGG, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. CAMPBELL, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. INOUE, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. BYRD, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). Pursuant to the order of the

House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Guam [Mr. UNDERWOOD] for 5 minutes.

KOREAN AIR FLIGHT 801 LEGISLATION

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, as Guam recuperates from Korean Air Flight 801's crash on August 6, I wish to direct the Nation's attention to a key participant in the facilitation of various procedures linked to this tragedy. From its investigative efforts to its family affairs responsibilities, the National Transportation Safety Board was and continues to be an instrumental component in this process. The NTSB's efficient work continues to clarify the many aspects of the crash, such as the state of the aircraft, weather conditions and the like.

One of the NTSB's main functions is its role in helping victims' families cope with their losses. I laud their efforts in tactfully dealing with the aggrieved individuals in such unsavory, but necessary, procedures as the identification of the remains. The NTSB has and continues to conduct their investigations professionally and competently. I have had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to meet with NTSB officials while they were on Guam and recently in Washington. They assure me that they are doing all that they can in their efforts to bring closure to this serious tragedy.

As Members of Congress, we should also exert every effort to aid those af-

ected by this tragedy. In the next few days, I will be introducing legislation which would require foreign air carriers to establish disaster assistance plans if they are permitted to travel in the United States. This legislation would allocate various responsibilities to the foreign air carriers should their aircraft have an accident on U.S. soil. American carriers are already abiding by this requirement under the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I propose this legislation stems from Guam's experience with Korean Air Flight 801's tragic end. Many have complained about lack of guidance and proper coordination on the part of Korean Air in their dealings with the victims' families. While it took over 20 hours for NTSB personnel to reach Guam, Korean Air personnel and victims' families not from Guam had already arrived on the island within 4 to 5 hours. At this point, much could have been done to coordinate family and media needs as well as protection of the crash site. However, due to the lack of established arrangements, family members did not receive information on the complex nature of the investigation as well as a clear vision of the various agencies and departments' priorities who were involved in the search and rescue mission.

The ensuing confusion has resulted in an exercise of patience and perseverance on behalf of various officials and family members alike. I believe that my legislation will eliminate much of the disorder which normally results from traumatic episodes such as this crash. I am working closely with NTSB and the Department of Transportation in the formulation of legislative language, and I am very encouraged by the support shown by my colleagues in the House and in the Senate. As Members of Congress, I believe we share the responsibility in ensuring the safety of our constituents whether

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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they choose to fly in domestic or foreign air carriers.

I would also like to highlight another benefit of this legislation. As we enter into the next millennium, evolving technology will continue to draw citizens of different nations closer together. This legislation will not only aid American citizens, it will also benefit other nationalities boarding flights with prearranged disaster assistance plans. Common sense points to the competency of this legislation and I encourage the rest of my colleagues to support it.

We must prove to our constituents that we care about them whether they fly domestic or foreign airlines, and I encourage my colleagues to be forward-looking and support my efforts in requiring foreign air carriers permitted to fly in the United States the responsibility to arrange disaster assistance plans should an accident occur on American soil. This legislation is a pledge that Korean Air's 801 passengers did not perish in vain.

GULF WAR VETERANS DESERVE TO RECEIVE BENEFITS AND HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot in the newspapers recently about the gulf war syndrome, so I thought I would take a moment to comment on them.

First of all, as chairman of the Veterans Subcommittee on Health, we are active in marking up pieces of legislation that affect this matter, but I wanted to point out this morning, Mr. Speaker, that I want to commend the Presidential advisory committee on gulf war veterans' illnesses for recommending to the administration that it create a permanent statutory program of benefits and health care for the thousands of veterans who have been plagued with a variety of unexplained symptoms.

Coincidentally, the full Committee on Veterans' Affairs will be marking up legislation that my subcommittee earlier formulated that will require the VA to create a \$5-million program, competitive grant program, under which up to 10 VA facilities would establish demonstration projects to test new approaches to treating Persian Gulf veterans which meets with their satisfaction.

This proposed legislation will require the VA to utilize three approaches. These approaches could be used alone or in combination. The new approaches are: First, a specialized clinic which serves Persian Gulf veterans; second, multi-disciplinary treatment aimed at managing symptoms; and third, the use of case managers.

I have a bill in Congress, H.R. 2206, which of course also reaffirms the VA's

obligation to provide verbal counseling to Persian Gulf veterans with respect to the finding of its registry examinations.

This legislation would also specify that these veterans are eligible for VA health care for any problem related to service in the Gulf, not just those problems that may be linked to exposure to toxic substances or environmental hazards.

While I commend the advisory committee for its recommendations to establish a permanent program of benefits and health care, Mr. Speaker, I must also voice my strong objection to the fact that it stands by a previous presidential commission report issued in January that declared that it could not find a causal link between the frequently reported symptoms of fatigue, headaches, sore joints, and rashes, commonly referred to as the gulf war syndrome. Furthermore, the committee report stated that it believed that stress was "likely to have been an important contributing factor."

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues may recall, in the last Congress we enacted legislation to extend priority health care for veterans exposed to agent orange and those who served in the Persian Gulf war through December 31, 1998. My commitment then and now is to provide priority health care to those who served in the gulf war. It is a long-standing commitment, and not just by virtue of my new position as chairman of the Subcommittee on Health.

With respect to what has been known as the gulf war syndrome, I took a deep interest in requesting that we aggressively seek answers to the many unexplained illnesses experienced by gulf war veterans. One of the first casualties of this mysterious group of diseases was a constituent of mine, Michael Adcock of Ocala, FL, who died at the age of 22 after serving in Operation Desert Storm.

After returning home from the gulf war, Michael suffered a number of symptoms which had befallen many other gulf war veterans, including persistent nausea, skin rashes, aching joints, hair loss, bleeding gums, blurred vision, and lack of energy, among others.

Michael died in 1993, three years after coming home from the Desert Storm operation. We are still looking for answers to the causes of this mysterious syndrome which appears to be indigenous to those who served in the gulf war.

I think we all know how terribly urgent it is that we continue with our research efforts until we find the answer to the cause of this syndrome that is so ubiquitous to those veterans.

In light of the controversy surrounding unexplained illnesses Desert Storm veterans have and are experiencing, the VA, Department of Defense, NIH and the HHS have long been conducting extensive research into possible causes of the unexplained illnesses associated with this military campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I am optimistic that through these efforts we might find the missing link that will explain this rash of perplexing illnesses which seem to be indigenous to those particular veterans. We all know how invaluable the research being conducted is and the need to find answers as to what is causing thousands of gulf war veterans to be plagued by a rash of unexplained symptoms.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Department of Defense and the VA will continue to both aggressively treat symptoms associated with Desert Storm syndrome and investigate its causes or cause.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 42 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. UPTON) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

We are grateful, Oh God, that whatever our place in life and whatever our need, whether our spirits are rising or whether we know adversity, we can express our thanksgivings to You for Your promises to us and to every person. We are grateful that we do not walk the paths of life alone, or face the mysterious and bewildering events of the day by ourselves, but Your guiding hand gives direction and Your spirit lifts us when we are weak. With thanksgiving and praise we begin this week and with hearts of gratitude we offer these words of prayer and petition.

This is our earnest prayer. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. KILDEE] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KILDEE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for