

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

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□ 1600

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

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

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

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

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HEATING OIL CRISIS IN NORTHEAST

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

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, today in the Northeast, we are confronted with a heating oil crisis of epic proportions. We have seen the price of petroleum skyrocket 166 percent over the course of a year. The diesel fuel that is required in order to move goods from one end of the State to the markets in Boston and New York has gone over \$2 a gallon. There are potatoes in storage of the current crop. It is estimated that there are 16,000 per hundredweight that were cultivated and grown and that are in storage and 13,000 of them are still there, unable to be moved to market, and if they are forced to stay there, the United States Government, the United States Department of Agriculture will have to pick up the tab. We have many sectors of the economy that we have seen a negative impact. Airline ticket prices have had surcharges. There have been traffic and tourism and economic development that has not taken place because of the higher fuel cost. We had a meeting last week with the Secretary of Energy in the Longworth House Office Building where over 40 Members, Democratic and Republican and Independent, all voiced the concerns of the citizens and the constituents that we all represent to the Secretary that the action of the administration was not sufficient given the crisis that was confronting people.

In my State of Maine, we are confronted with double hardships, because in our State which is 36th in per capita wage income, where people have a hard time making ends meet, anyway, have very few dollars for disposable income. Yet they have seen their oil bills double and triple. Maine's older population, they are a poorer population, they are living in a rural area that depend upon fuel and utilities to be able to stay warm, to be able to make sure

that they are getting their goods and medicine, and to be forced to be choosing between fuel, food and medications is a triple hardship for these people.

We have been asking for a concerted effort, a comprehensive approach to this situation here with the Federal Energy Secretary Richardson who is coming to Maine and to Boston tomorrow as part of an energy summit. We are asking the President to engage in strong diplomacy with OPEC and non-OPEC states, because within our region of the country, most of the petroleum and the distiller products which they refer to end up coming from the Gulf Coast region of the country into the Northeast region. But we still have petroleum products that are coming in from Venezuela, from the Virgin Islands and from Canada. It is important for this administration to be making sure that that fuel is getting into the market and that the prices are stabilized or decreasing. We are recognizing that even Iraq is withholding oil from the energy mix just to penalize people during this very difficult time. When we have aided the countries of Mexico and Venezuela and other countries, Saudi Arabia, we have aided them in their times of need, we are asking the President and the Secretary of Energy to engage in strong measures to make sure that those countries recognize that we need them to increase the output. We are looking at gasoline prices being at record levels. Tourist season is down the road and one of the largest industries in our region of the country and we are going to see this negatively impacted.

As a matter of reference, there was testimony today before the Transportation appropriations subcommittee that because of the higher prices of fuel, we are seeing a decline in automobile and truck traffic and we are seeing a negative impact on our surface transportation dollars that were gauged for a certain amount of activity, we are seeing a negative impact. We have seen a negative impact on agriculture estimated by the United States Department of Agriculture, \$1 billion of lost farm income because of the circumstances here that we are looking at with these higher costs that have to be borne by the farmers. We are seeing it going across the board.

I recognize that there may be some regions of the country that are not experiencing these higher prices. But I also recognize that we have the impact that goes across the board. One thing has always been certain here in Congress, when one part of the country has been hurting, we all stand together because at other times through our country's history in the last years, we have seen these impacts throughout the country on a national basis with emergencies and disasters.

We are asking for comprehensive legislation with these special orders, we are asking for action on the part of the administration so that people do not have to be victimized in the Northeast again.

LIVE FIRE MILITARY TRAINING ON PUERTO RICAN ISLAND

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

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, a tragedy has recently occurred in the defense of our Nation and the protection of the men and women who serve in its defense. Specifically, we sent our USS Bataan Amphibious Ready Group, with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit embarked, into a high threat area without the proper training and instruction required. The frustrating point about it was the training was available, planned and scheduled. But due to political considerations, it was canceled, leaving our Marines and sailors vulnerable and frankly unprepared.

I am speaking about Vieques, a tiny island that is part of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico that the Department of the Navy has been using since 1950 as a live fire bombing range. The range provides the ability for the Navy and Marine Corps to conduct simulated amphibious landing operations while using combined arms of artillery, naval gunfire, and close air support. It serves as the culminating exercise for a series of workups that the ARG goes through prior to deploying to the Mediterranean for a 6-month cruise. Vieques is a unique training site. It is the only facility on the East Coast with unfettered air and sea space, deep water access, amphibious landing beaches, nearby military ports and airfields, and the capability to support live naval gunfire operations. Additionally, it allows the Navy and Marine Corps to conduct amphibious combined arms training, Naval surface fire support training, end-to-end strike training and high altitude air tactics. Our Marines and sailors are combat ready for all contingencies because of the realistic live fire training afforded by Vieques. The current situation on Vieques where the President ordered a cease to all operations on the range initially and has since worked out a "deal" with the Governor of Puerto Rico where inert ordnance vice live ordnance will be used turns this into a readiness issue. If our Marines and sailors cannot train, they will not be ready. We send them to hostile areas to protect a presence, show the Flag, with the understanding that if crises should arise, they will be prepared to quell it. I am here to report that we have dictated a mission that cannot be accomplished. Yet the solution is simple. Open the Vieques range to live fire bombing, naval gunfire, and artillery.

We allow live fire bombing in nearly every State of the union. Why would we stop bombing a commonwealth when bombs continue to be dropped and rounds fired in Utah, Nevada, California, Florida and other places? Might I add that these bombs and rounds are fired in closer proximity to our civilian population, more so than on Vieques where there is a 10-mile buffer zone.

The reason, I guess, is because there are no votes to be garnered by the Puerto Rican population in New York for not bombing those States. Think of the precedent we now set by compromising with officials from Puerto Rico. Closing Vieques could set off a host of issues in other countries as well as our own States where we currently conduct training. The net result is having a military that can put rounds on target in theory only. Without practical application, we put our forces in harm's way without even sending them to hostile areas. I do not think we should stand by and jeopardize our servicemen for someone else's political gain.

There is no compromise when it comes to reopening Vieques. Opening the range as proposed for inert ordnance is not practical. More can be gained by conducting separate, compartmentalized exercises on ranges that accept live ordnance. Training with dud ordnance excludes artillery, mortars and direct fire weapons system as these systems either do not have inert ammunition available or insufficient quantities are on hand to conduct training. Limiting the range to inert ordnance denies the naval services from achieving essential live fire training and eliminates essential "arms" from the combined arms network that makes the Navy and Marine Corps so successful on the battlefield. Using live ordnance is the only way to simulate actual combat conditions. It instills confidence in our Marines and sailors on their procedures and equipment and validates every aspect of weapon employment. Without live fire training, the Navy-Marine team would deploy without having tested its ability to integrate, organize, execute and sustain high tempo combat operations with all weapons systems and live fire ordnance.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot look myself in the mirror knowing that we have sent our troops out to do a job that we have not prepared them for when the tools to prepare them are in place and ready for use. Is it not unusual that the decision to end the live fire bombing rides on the coattails of the President's decision to grant clemency to convicted Puerto Rican terrorists? We can mask the reasons for the decision by saying that the bombing was stopped to prevent further casualties, but the real purpose seems to be political. Mr. Rodriguez was killed in a live fire accident several months ago in Vieques. However, his death is not justification to threaten several thousand of our military members by closing the range. If we stopped training every time we had a training casualty, we would never train.

I implore my fellow Members of Congress to look at this situation carefully and apply some common sense. The encroachment of military training areas is alarmingly on the rise and this is another example. We must provide our military with the best possible facilities so they can be ready to respond to

any contingency. This is proven in the recent events in Bosnia and East Timor where we called upon our service members and thrust them into hostile environments with the assumption that they were prepared and trained. Without Vieques, our naval forces are dealt a severe blow. With that, I make it a point to ensure that the island of Vieques is reopened indefinitely for live fire training with the intent that we provide our young men and women like those currently deployed with the USS Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit with the best possible training before sending them into harm's way.

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

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

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INTRODUCTION OF MILITARY FAMILY FOOD STAMP TAX CREDIT BILL

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I want to read part of a transcript from the June 25 edition of "20/20" which featured a story on our military families who cannot make ends meet. I quote from the transcript.

"We begin with a shameful story about the men and women we count on to protect us, members of the United States armed services. They are prepared to die for us, but did you know that some of them must stand in food lines to help feed their families?"

Again, I quote from the transcript:

"It is a shocking sight to see proud American soldiers accepting charity and Federal aid just to get by."

The show also featured a 26-year-old computer operations specialist who has served 6 years in the Navy, Mr. Speaker, but makes only \$18,000 a year to care for his wife and three children. He said, and I quote, "I've talked to managers at fast food restaurants who make more money than I do. And I'm prepared to die for my country if necessary. And sometimes that seems really unfair."

A reported 600,000 enlisted troops, almost half the entire military base, make a base salary of \$18,000 or less. On May 21 of last year, "CBS This Morning" did a profile during its "Eye on America" on the state of our military families. The reporter interviewed a church volunteer and former military wife by the name of Pat Kallenbarger who works to help our military families in need.

She said, and I quote, "It's not unusual for me to find a family sleeping on the floor for lack of beds and eating on the floor because they don't have a

table and chairs, and they don't have the money to either buy them or rent them."

I further quote:

"I find babies in cardboard cartons. They'd be in a dresser drawer, except the family doesn't own a dresser."

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Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. These are our military families. In fact, I introduced a bill, H.R. 1055, a year ago, that would help give these men and women on food stamps a \$500 tax credit. I am urging our leadership, both Republican and Democrat, this year to please make sure before we end this session in October that we have spoken to this issue of our men and women on food stamps.

Mr. Speaker, I have before me a Marine. This Marine is holding in his arms his baby daughter named Bridgett, and the young lady standing on his feet is his 3-year-old daughter named Megan.

Mr. Speaker, this Marine is getting ready to deploy for Bosnia. The sad part of all of this, this Marine represents all of our men and women in uniform and represents those 600,000 that are making under \$18,000.

We must remember that these men and women that are willing to die for this country, 60 percent of them have families. I think about this little girl, Megan, because you can see in her eyes a concern, and maybe that concern even at that young age is the fact that her daddy might leave and never come back. I do not know. But I do know this, Mr. Speaker, as a Member of this Congress, that those of us on both sides of the political aisle, we have an obligation, and in fact I think it is deplorable and unacceptable that we have not begun to help those men and women in uniform on food stamps.

So I urge my colleagues, we have about 80 Members of this House, both Republican and Democrat, on this bill, and I encourage my colleagues to please join me in this effort to make sure that this year, before we leave, that we do something tangible to help those men and women on food stamps.

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

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

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

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