

As we begin this new session of Congress, let us resolve together to surprise everyone and do what needs to be done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM TESTING

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, last week the Department of Defense conducted its most recent flight test of our National Missile Defense system. A great deal has been said and written about this test in the last few days—much of it erroneous—and I think it is important that we draw the correct conclusions about what this test does and does not mean.

The test conducted last week was one of a series of 18 scheduled flight tests of the National Missile Defense system, and only the second to actually attempt to intercept a strategic ballistic missile by colliding with it in space. The first test this past October was primarily a test of the vehicle that actually hits the target missile. Last week's test was significantly more complicated and involved additional, newly developed elements of the National Missile Defense system, such as the ground-based radar and the Battle Management Command, Control and Communications system. In fact, a senior Defense Department official told reporters before the test that the battle management system is: "the most difficult and sophisticated part of this entire program."

The latest test began with the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. After its rocket engine burned out, the target missile deployed both a mock warhead and a balloon decoy intended to try to fool the interceptor missile. The missile was tracked by satellites and by the National Missile Defense system's ground-based radar at Kwajalein Atoll in the South Pacific, and the interceptor missile was launched to meet the target. It sighted the target missile and then closed on it.

While the interceptor did not hit the target warhead, it appeared that all of the systems tested functioned properly until the final six seconds of these, when the infrared sensors on the interceptor vehicle did not operate correctly—as they had in the October test.

While the failure to hit the target is disappointing, it is hardly justification for all the negative comments I have heard about last week's test. It's important to remember that a test program involves the testing of weapon systems to see if they perform as they were designed. The purpose of this test program is to uncover problems and correct them. If it were possible to take a design straight from the drawing board to the field, we wouldn't need testing programs. We test because we expect to find problems and try to solve them.

What's remarkable about the National Missile Defense testing is not that the intercept vehicle missed on the second test but that it succeeded on the first one. Many newly introduced elements had to work right on this most recent test even to achieve a near miss, and the really significant news on this test is that all of the new elements which added complexity to the challenge seemed to have performed very well; the only thing that apparently didn't work properly was the one element which was already proven to work in the October flight.

Some of the critics of missile defense have said this test was a major setback for the program. It was not. In fact, it demonstrated significant progress in the development of a workable and reliable National Missile Defense capability.

The October flight was primarily a test of the intercept vehicle and its ability to identify a target in space, discriminate between the warhead and a decoy, and collide with the warhead. It did exactly what it was designed to do, but critics of the program claimed that had the decoy not attracted the intercept vehicle's attention, it never would have detected the warhead. They argued that the system can not work when there are decoys, and only did work because there was a decoy.

As ridiculous as that sounds, it has been echoed by those who have long opposed missile defense in any form. An editorial in the New York Times claimed that the October success was "lucky" and occurred "almost by accident." Now wait a minute and think about this. When two objects—each about the size of a chair, launched 4300 miles apart and traveling at a combined speed of 15,000 miles an hour—collide in the vastness of space 140 miles above the Earth's surface, that's not an accident. That's a demonstration of some very capable technology and engineering.

Clearly, for some, no amount of evidence will be convincing. But repeating something that's wrong doesn't make it right.

Predictably, some are urging the National Missile Defense program be slowed down or even shelved in the wake of last week's test. For some critics, delay or cancellation is always the right course of action when it comes to missile defense. Others suggest abandoning this program for another approach using different basing modes, but that will only delay the National Missile Defense deployment we need now. Still others believe the administration's assessment of technological readiness should be delayed in order to remove the decision from presidential politics. This, too, would be a mistake.

We have a National Missile Defense program because we have a growing vulnerability to the threat of ballistic missile attack. That threat will not wait for us to conduct a test program with perfect results, something that has never happened with any weapon

system. Delay in deploying a defense against these missiles only serves the interests of our adversaries.

This threat is growing. We must all remember that this program is not just an academic exercise. The Senate passed the National Missile Defense Act last spring; in September the Intelligence Community released a new National Intelligence Estimate of the ballistic missile threat which, according to its unclassified summary, judges that some rogue states may have ICBMs much sooner than previously thought, and that those missiles will be more sophisticated than previously estimated. In just the past few weeks, British authorities intercepted components bound for Libya for missiles with three times the range of Tripoli's current arsenal. According to news reports from last week, the Director of Central Intelligence cannot rule out that Iran may already be able to build a nuclear weapon. And this past weekend, North Korea said it was reconsidering its declaration to refrain from any more long-range missile tests, though of course a moratorium on flight testing, however long, does not mean that North Korea isn't making progress on its missile development programs.

While the threat continues to intensify, we've already had too much delay in deploying a missile defense system. In fact, we are behind today precisely because those who counsel delay have long had their way, not because of any inherent problems with the technology. What's required now is that we stay the course we set for ourselves when we passed the National Missile Defense Act of 1999. That act makes it the policy of the United States to deploy a National Missile Defense system as soon as technologically possible. With the successful test in October and last week's test incorporating additional elements of the National Missile Defense system, the talented men and women of our armed forces and industry have demonstrated that this system is technologically possible. The test program is in its early stages and much can and will be done to refine the system between now and the start of missile production. But there is no question that this technology is not just within our reach but is actually in our grasp now.

I congratulate the Defense Department for the extraordinary technical accomplishments it has achieved so far, and urge it to continue to work to improve this important program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

PAYING DOWN THE DEBT

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, before I start my principal subject, I will take a couple minutes to commend the Democratic leader for his earlier comments.

We are all ready to go to work, and tomorrow we start with the Budget

Committee. We are to hear from Chairman Greenspan from the Federal Reserve, and we are going to be talking about where we go from here in terms of the economy.

Based on what I hear in the various Presidential campaigns, it looks as though we are going to be discussing paying down the debt to some degree. The question is, to what degree? Where is it that we ought to be focusing the use of the significant balances, the surpluses we are going to see? I hope, consistent with Senator DASCHLE's comments, we will not be looking at tax cuts as a principal direction. To paraphrase Will Rogers, I never met anyone who didn't want to pay less taxes. But the fact is, our economy is moving at the pace it is for very specific reasons—encouraging investment, curbing our spending, and in many cases curbing it where it hurts but is necessary to get through this transitory period where we went from a debit balance to a credit balance. Looking at our surpluses and wondering about the debates, I contemplate where we are going to be spending these surpluses. I think the way to continue this prosperity, the way to make sure that America goes into this new century with as much energy as it can have, is to be looking at paying down the debt, paying it down as fully as we can, taking care of the essential programs that we know are needed by our constituents across the country.

The last thing I think people want to see is random tax cuts that benefit the wealthy to an unusually high degree, while those struggling to make a living are concerned about interest costs for mortgages, their schooling, and various other things that are an important part of basic life.

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE TRAGIC FIRE AT SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Senate Resolution 244, which I introduced earlier today with Senator TORRICELLI.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 244) expressing sympathy for the victims of the tragic fire at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey, on January 19, 2000.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, tragedy struck in New Jersey last week. It was obviously of enough significant interest that it was portrayed across the country. Three students who were 18 years old lost their lives in a dormitory fire, and several others were seriously injured. We are still waiting, with hope and prayer, to hear that they are going to be able to recover. This is virtually in my neighborhood back

home. I know Seton Hall University well. I know the president and the archbishop of the diocese; we are very good friends.

Everybody wanted to reach out and do something. The first of the three funerals was held today. It is a sad day. It raises a question about what we should expect in a dormitory. Hind-sight won't do us much good in this instance. The building they were in was built a long time ago. The tragic fire took place last Wednesday. The fire started inside a six-story residence hall. It took the lives of 3 students and injured 62 others, including at least 58 students, 2 police officers, and 2 firefighters.

Mr. President, we don't have to tell anybody that nothing is as painful as a senseless accident—which perhaps we can avoid seeing in the future—that takes the lives of young people. Anyone who is a parent or relative of an 18-year-old would be seriously grieved by what happened.

I know I speak for all of us in the Senate in extending our sympathies to the families of the three students who died in the fire. They are Frank Caltabillota of West Long Branch, NJ; John Giunta of Vineland, NJ; and Aaron Karol of Green Brook, NJ, whose funeral was the first one this morning.

We also extend our support and prayers to the families of the students and the others who were injured. We are tremendously grateful to the firefighters and the other people who worked so hard to prevent the loss of more lives.

It is still too early to know what caused this fire, but we must make sure, once the cause is known, that Federal, State, and local jurisdictions take whatever steps are necessary to prevent this from happening again. Students have a fundamental right to pursue an education in a safe, secure environment. Parents have a right to know their children are protected from harm while on school property.

Seton Hall University is holding a memorial service tomorrow for the victims of the fire. The enormity of this tragedy, however, extends far beyond the confines of Seton Hall University's campus. At the very least, the investigation of this catastrophe should sharpen our focus on fire prevention at campuses across the country and should mark this fire, Lord willing, as the last one of its kind.

I have introduced this resolution, which should pass the Senate today, expressing the sympathy of the entire Senate to the families of the victims and the Seton Hall community.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 244) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 244

Whereas at approximately 4:30 a.m. on January 19, 2000, a fire broke out in the com-

mons area on the third floor of Boland Hall, a six story residence hall housing 600 students at Seton Hall University, and this fire took the lives of three students—Frank S. Caltabillota of West Long Branch, New Jersey, John N. Giunta of Vineland, New Jersey and Aaron C. Karol of Green Brook, New Jersey, and, in addition, 58 persons were injured, including 54 students, two South Orange firefighters and two South Orange police officers;

Whereas numerous Seton Hall students risked their own lives as the fire broke out to save the lives of their fellow dormitory residents;

Whereas firefighters, paramedics, police officers and other emergency personnel from the surrounding communities worked bravely into the early morning darkness to reduce casualties and extinguish the fire;

Whereas the entire Seton Hall University community has banded together in grief to remember the fallen students, and numerous people outside the university recognize the enormity of this tragedy and the need to do everything possible to keep it from happening again since every student should be able to pursue an education in a safe, secure environment:

Now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses its sympathy to the families and friends of Frank S. Caltabillota, John N. Giunta and Aaron C. Karol on the occasion of the funeral service on January 25, 2000;

(2) expresses its hope for a speedy recovery to those students, firefighters and police officers injured in the fire;

(3) expresses its support for all of the students, faculty and staff at Seton Hall University as they heal from this tragedy;

(4) expresses its support and thanks to the brave firefighters, paramedics, police and other emergency workers who saved numerous lives;

(5) pledges to ensure that Federal, State and local government entities work together to prevent a tragedy like this from occurring again, so that our nation's college students can live, work and study in the safest possible environment.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

THE TRAGIC FIRE AT SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

Mr. REED. Mr. President, let me associate myself with the remarks of the Senator from New Jersey. I agree with him on the seriousness of the tragedy that befell his constituents in New Jersey. Several years ago, in Rhode Island, we had a similar tragic experience at another Dominican college, Providence College, where many students were injured and several were practically killed. All of us in America extend our sympathy to these families in New Jersey and to the Seton Hall University academic community.

THE NIXON V. SHRINK MISSOURI GOVERNMENT PAC DECISION

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to inform the Senate that today the U.S. Supreme Court, in