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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2001, 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 Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

CURRENT AVIATION SECURITY SCREENING IS WOEFULLY INADEQUATE

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, the House needs to move forward and quickly with a thoughtful and comprehensive transportation and infrastructure security package. It should not be just limited to aviation. There are other areas of vulnerability that go to other modes of transportation, whether they are transportation moving people or cargo, our pipelines, our dams, generating facilities, nuclear plants, a whole host of things.

For now the major focus is on aviation, and we are coming close to some agreement, but there is one vital issue still in disagreement on this package. There are a number of smaller items, but one in particular, and that is, who should be the front-line providers of aviation security at the airport? There is a whole host of places we need security.

There is what is called the backside or the airside of the airport. Access to the airplanes where people, things, contraband, could be smuggled on board, or weapons, that needs to be tightened

up dramatically. Thirty-eight percent of the security breaches registered by the FAA in the last 2 years related to screening at airports.

Now, this is extraordinarily variable across the United States. Some airports, my little airport in Eugene, the screeners there do a very good job. They are very upset with me because of pushing for federalization and standardization of this, but other airports are a disaster, and we cannot allow those disastrous breaches and problems to continue.

With whom do we want to continue the current system of private contracting? We already have, documented for decades, problems with the private contracting firms. Most recently, and outrageously, we have aviation safeguards at Miami International Airport, where the manager was falsifying background checks. The company was fined more than \$110,000, put on 5 years probation. The manager was sentenced to 5 years in Federal prison, and guess what, they are still providing the security screening at Miami International Airport.

Then we have Argenbright Security, which does Boston, Newark and Washington. That company paid a \$1.2 million fine for doctoring records and allowing convicted felons to work at the Philadelphia airport but Miami international officials said they were satisfied with the company's work.

That is the status quo. Those are the most outrageous examples. Then we have the common examples, the fact that 90 percent of the screening personnel in the United States, unlike at my little home airport, where people stay in their jobs for years, 90 percent have less than 6 months experience because these are at all the major airports, the lowest paid entry level positions into the airport.

We had testimony to that effect almost 2 years ago, when the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) and I first

proposed making these into Federal law enforcement positions where the people would be well paid, well trained, and we know they would be subjected to a thorough background check by the Federal Government, not by some private firm that sometimes has falsified those documents.

The turnover at Boston Logan Airport among screeners last year, 207 percent; Houston, 237 percent; Atlanta, 375 percent; St. Louis, 416 percent. The screener of the year 2 years ago named by the private security companies came from St. Louis. He came before our committee and said, you know, Congressman, I am really lucky. I love this job and I can afford to do it. I said, well, what do you mean you can afford to do it? He said, well, I do not have to live on the income they pay. Nobody could live on that income. He said, I have got outside sources of income. I own some rental properties and I have got a little bit of other income so I can do the job. But everybody else, they look at it as a way to work up to McDonald's or Burger King, or maybe even really the top of the scale, cleaning the airplanes.

This is not right. These people are the front line. They should be like INS, like Customs, and yes, like agriculture, where they are uniformed Federal law enforcement personnel with the right to question and detain people who might present a threat. We know they are professionally trained, they are paid well and we get rid of this turnover and the problems with the background screening.

This is the major item in contention. We cannot be blinded. I have actually had colleagues say you know what we should do, we should privatize this, and I said guess what, it has been privatized, it has been supervised by the FAA although the new rules for screening companies were delayed for about 6 years. Not because of just bureaucratic intransigence at the FAA,

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

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but because the security companies, the airlines, the Air Transport Association, and many others designed to delay those rules for years because they knew the new system would be more expensive and would be a little bit better than what we have today, but would still not be as good as a uniform, Federalized system.

That is where we need to go to assure the traveling public, and then we have to look at all the other issues that relate to aviation and other modes of transportation.

BERLIN CONFERENCE ON TERRORISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BALLENGER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to come to the floor today to spend a few minutes providing a very preliminary report on the status of our worldwide coalition against terrorism.

Last week, I traveled to Berlin, Germany, to join leaders of our allied nations from around the world for the first international conference on terrorism since the attacks on New York and Washington. The conference included representatives from Great Britain, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Korea, Japan, Ireland, Israel, and even Jordan. I was privileged to lead a discussion with His Royal Highness, Prince Hassan of Jordan, and with Nobel Laureate David Trimble of the United Kingdom.

During our meetings with America's strongest allies around the world, I arrived at four basic conclusions about our allied response to these terrorist attacks.

Number one, my colleagues should be aware that all of our friends and partners, particularly the residents of Berlin, grieve with the people of the United States.

From the piles of flowers, cards, and candles stacked waist-high on the barricades just outside the American Embassy to the teary-eyed mayor of a small town who handed a condolence book signed by everyone in his village to our ambassador, the evidence of genuine sorrow for the people of the United States was overwhelming.

On Thursday, I met with my friend, Ambassador Dan Coates, formerly of this body and now our man in Berlin, as he showed me the thousands of drawings, cards, and letters sent to the people of the United States at the embassy, some simply were addressed in crayon to our "Our Dear Friends."

As the only American official at this conference, I was inundated with heartfelt expressions of condolence, and I felt the awkward gratitude of a citizen of a nation not accustomed to asking for help.

Secondly, I am pleased to report that our foreign policy initiatives imme-

diately following the attack have been an unqualified success. President Bush has reversed many previous negative impressions of our country's leadership. In comment after comment, representatives from countries that had once ridiculed the United States foreign policy heaped praise on the patience and the strength of our President.

Additionally, Hoosiers can be proud of the great work of our ambassador, Dan Coates. He has been the very personification of grace under pressure. I learned Thursday that he and his wife, Marsha, arrived in Germany only 4 days before the terrorist attacks. Less than 1 week after his arrival, he stood to receive the sympathies of over 200,000 Germans who gathered in a candlelight vigil at the Brandenburg Gate. This is a tribute all Americans should know about.

Thirdly, the European political support for military action is firm but not permanent. Most of the participants of the conference openly spoke of the need for a strong retaliatory strike. As one diplomat said, the terrorists must "learn that there is a steep price to be paid for such action."

Most also noted, however, that support for military action might not last long. Representatives from Great Britain and Germany spoke of strong antiwar movements in many NATO countries, and predicted that, after recovering from the initial shock of the attacks, left-of-center governments in these countries would, again, face pressure to withdraw support for U.S. action.

America must act boldly and rapidly in insisting upon a military response before support from our allies dissipates.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, our allies are deeply skeptical about the depth of America's commitment in the Middle East. They must be reassured. Many of our friends in the Middle East told me privately that they believed the United States has been in retreat in the region since the early 1990s. The failure to respond forcefully to terrorist attacks on our North Africa embassies and the USS *Cole*, combined with the last administration's determination to pressure Israel into trading land for peace, has sent the message that U.S. resolve in the region is weakening.

Whatever action we initiate must involve the overwhelming and sustained use of force to demonstrate our unwavering support for stability and democracy in the region. Only this type of response will allay concerns among our friends and provide a clear warning to our enemies that America is in the Middle East to stay.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I told all of the assembled diplomats and parliamentarians at a banquet on Friday evening that it was altogether fitting that we were holding this conference in the city of Berlin.

When I first visited Berlin as a college student 25 years ago, the city was

divided by a wall separating east from west. It was nearly universally accepted that this devastated city would remain divided, but the United States refused it abandon the dream of a reunified Berlin.

From President Kennedy's airlift to President Reagan's challenge that Gorbachev "tear down this wall," America stood for peace and freedom in Berlin. Today our dream of a reunited Germany and a thriving and united Berlin is a reality. If Berlin could rise from the ashes of war and division, surrounded on all sides by hostile powers, perhaps the Middle East, too, can rise from a history of warfare and deep disunity to become a place where peace and freedom prosper.

OUR HOPE NOT BROKEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, recently I attended a candlelight vigil at the Deer Park High School on Long Island on behalf of those missing and lost on the attack on the World Trade Center.

Following that ceremony, I have had the privilege of meeting with the Szewczuk family. Jessica Szewczuk gave me a poem she wrote about the Trade Center attack. Her words are particularly poignant because her father is a New York firefighter, one of the countless heroes who has saved lives in the true spirit of America.

On behalf of all of those heroes, I would like to read Jessica's poem to my colleagues. She writes:

When the Twin Towers were hit
Everyone was in shock
People screaming and running
Not believing what was happening to us
We the nation of strength and teams
The nation that gives hope and dreams
The nation that was built with confidence
and care.
The nation that will always be there
When this tragedy occurred everyone went
mad
The city was in chaos, really bad
People said that everyone would be torn
They were right for we continue to mourn
This tragedy will be hard to mend
But never have we been so close
Everyone is everyone's friend
This terror that happened just brought us
tighter
Boosted up our confidence and made our
hearts brighter
We are all working as a team, we're all help-
ing out
The city is slowly being fixed and there is
less doubt
So there goes to show that whatever may be
Our people will always be confident and free
Nothing can ruin our foundation
No one can take apart this nation
No one can kill America's heart
Nothing can rip our bond apart
Our flesh and blood has built this great na-
tion
Our hearts and mind have created America's
foundation
So whatever happens and whatever goes on
America will always continue to be strong
Nothing can make us weak