

will go a long way toward setting the stage for the kind of political reconciliation that ultimately will make Iraq a peaceful country.

I wish to touch a moment on the report by General Jones on the conditions of the Iraqi military. I got a very positive assessment from General Petraeus. Their casualty rate is 3 to 1 to ours. They are taking the fight to the enemy, and they apparently are conducting themselves in stellar fashion.

However, they do need our help and will continue to need our help. I think it is important we note, as General Jones reports, that while he sees progress by the Iraqi military, surely they are going to be needing our help in logistics and air cover and things such as that for some time to come.

There is a big difference between them taking the brunt of the fight, which I think they are poised to do in the months to come, and still continuing to need the kind of backup and support that undoubtedly will take longer for them to build. It is a big difference for our military to be assisting in logistics than it is to be at the front of the battlefield. I think the Iraqis might be in a position to do so. I do not think there is any question that our goal is a successful Iraq, an Iraq that will not be a safe haven for al-Qaida, nor will it give Iran the kind of political control over this country that would be cataclysmic to the security and stability of the region. That is our goal.

As a result of that goal being achieved, then we will be able to withdraw our troops. But the goal ought to not be troop withdrawal at all costs. That would be a mistake for our country. It would be a mistake for the region. I believe that while progress is difficult and the sacrifices are great, that enough progress is being made for us to understand the way forward is a way of continuing involvement there until such time as Iraq has reached the point of stability that they can govern themselves and also provide for their own security.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado.

AMENDMENT NO. 2622

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise to speak on amendment No. 2622, which the Senate will be voting on later today offered by Senator SALAZAR.

Mr. President, I regret that I must rise to oppose this amendment from my friend and colleague from Colorado. But this issue is of too great importance to the men and women who are fighting for our freedoms around the world.

My colleague has characterized this as an Army versus the ranchers and farmers issue. I do not think this is our fighting men in the military versus farmers and ranchers, and here is why. Because I believe there are willing sell-

ers and willing buyers in this particular instance. Private property owners, I have been told, approached the Army and said: Look, we have some land available we want you to consider in your plans to expand a needed training area, for the Army to consider looking at dealing with us and selling that land.

So I think this particular proposal does not need to be an Army versus farmers and ranchers. I think this can be worked out with deliberation and thought during this process. Two years ago, the entire Colorado congressional delegation made a successful argument to the BRAC Commission to keep Fort Carson Army Base in Colorado Springs open. We made a commitment that if the Army kept Fort Carson open and even added soldiers, we would make sure our soldiers stationed there would be provided with adequate training to do their job.

The Army kept Fort Carson open and restationed two new brigades, totalling more than 10,000 new soldiers, to the mountain post due to the commitment made by the entire Colorado delegation.

It would be hypocritical for us as a delegation to now tell the Army: We want those new soldiers, and we want the economic benefit from those new soldiers, but we are unwilling to do what is required of us as a State to ensure that our men and women stationed at Fort Carson are provided with adequate training.

This amendment is a horrible precedent that will impact more than Fort Carson. It is a national security issue at a time when our Nation is engaged in armed conflict. Currently, the Army has a backlog of 2 million acres needed for training. The shortfall is expected to increase to 5 million acres by 2011, according to the Department of the Army's response to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2007, which is available for perusal by my colleagues.

This issue could be reaching your State. Congress should be working with the Pentagon to address this serious backlog that is hindering the Army's ability to provide adequate training our soldiers need and deserve.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letter of opposition to the Salazar amendment from the Secretary of Army, Pete Geren.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. ALLARD. According to the Army, the Salazar amendment is too restrictive. It prevents them from doing anything on Pinon Canyon to resolve even their differences with the farmers and ranchers, including photocopying handouts or maps to the citizens with questions, holding community meetings to find common ground, and even doing a required environmental impact statement.

Senator SALAZAR and I have offered amendments to last year's and this year's Defense authorization bill to address many of the valid issues raised by concerned citizens and elected officials whose communities are affected by the proposed expansion of Pinon Canyon, the need for any expansion of Pinon Canyon by the Army, and the economic and environmental impact to southeastern Colorado. I agree with my colleague that the Army needs to answer questions. I agree we need to ensure the residents and communities impacted by any expansion are part of the process and their concerns are addressed. I believe this amendment would not accomplish those goals but, rather, actually keep us from getting needed answers to which they are entitled. Where we disagree is on the approach. This amendment will have long-term unintended consequences we could regret. I ask my colleagues to consider those consequences before they vote.

I ask my colleagues to vote no on the Salazar amendment.

EXHIBIT 1

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY,

Washington, DC, September 6, 2007.

Senator JACK REED,

Acting Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Military Construction, and Veterans' Affairs, Washington, DC.

Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON,

Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Military Construction, and Veteran's Affairs, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN AND SENATOR HUTCHISON: I am writing to express the Army's views regarding the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site (PCMS) in Colorado. The Army wishes to expand the PCMS in order to provide our Soldiers with the best, most realistic, and doctrinally sound training possible.

The Army's need for U.S.-based training and maneuver space will increase significantly as a result of the planned return of approximately 70,000 troops from overseas bases. These Soldiers previously conducted much of their training and achieved their readiness standards by using overseas training and maneuver space; the same requirements are now being shifted onto an existing U.S. installation footprint. Adding an increased requirement to a finite amount of training space can be partially managed with work-arounds, but there are limits. At some point, training can become degraded in quality and unrealistic. Moreover, the land itself must also recover from intense training exercises. Adding more training exercises to the same plot of land can pose environmental risks.

In addition, changes to technology and the organization of our units requires each Brigade Combat Team (BCT) to be more agile, be more readily deployable, and be able to secure significantly more territory than their Cold-War era counterparts. To properly train our BCTs, they need to meet higher home-station readiness levels than ever before. To attain this readiness, they need adequate space to maneuver under realistic conditions. Shipping units elsewhere is not an acceptable substitute for home-station training because it would take valuable time from Soldiers away from their Families—Soldiers and Families are already bearing tough sacrifices on behalf of the nation.

The Army has a growing training land shortfall that will reach 5 million acres across the entire country by 2011. Fort Carson is not the only base with projected training land shortfalls, but not all bases have an opportunity to expand to remedy to the problem. The Army has the ability to address some of the overall training land shortfall by acquiring land at PCMS. If the Army is legislatively prevented from expanding PCMS, it will harm the Army's ability to provide necessary and realistic training to units stationed at Fort Carson, as well as Active, Reserve, and Guard units training there.

The Army firmly opposes legislation to limit the Army's proposed expansion of PCMS. Indeed, the Army may need to expand other installations around the country, and such legislation could create a dangerous precedent that the Army will forever be locked into its current training and maneuver space footprint regardless of any future changes to organization, technology, doctrine, or threats.

Thank you for your consideration of the Army's views as you complete your work on S. 1645.

Sincerely,

PETE GEREN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. SALAZAR. What is the pending business and the amount of time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is still in a period of morning business, and the majority controls 5 minutes.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for up to 2 minutes of that time, followed by Senator BROWN for the remainder.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I want to make sure we don't have Republican colleagues who have a need to speak further in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican side has 40 seconds remaining in their allotted time.

Mr. ALLARD. Very good. I have no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Colorado for his views on this amendment. I also thank him for the work we do together in support of our military installations which we consider to be part of the crown jewel of the Nation's defense and homeland security, and we often work on those matters together.

I will take exception with respect to a characterization concerning my amendment in that there is some inconsistency between what we did in the 2005 BRAC recommendations, which we all supported, and this particular amendment.

The fact is, the BRAC, in its findings, said we would move the additional brigades into Fort Carson, that there was sufficient capacity to provide all the training that was required there at Fort Carson, and that is because Fort Carson has over 100,000 acres on its own site and 235,000 acres of additional land. Now the Army wants to acquire land that is going to make the Army's hold-

ings at Piñon Canyon greater than the size of the entire State of Rhode Island. My question is, What has changed from January of 2005 until today? What has changed is that all of a sudden the Army has decided that it needs all this additional land.

I go back to my initial argument, which is, if we care about private property rights, if we care about the ranchers in southeast Colorado, if we care about national security and making sure we are investing taxpayer dollars wisely, then it is important we do a timeout, which is all that my amendment does.

I urge my Republican and Democratic colleagues to support my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

VA OUTSOURCING

Mr. BROWN. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, the amendment I will be calling up later this morning does not change current law. It simply reminds the Veterans' Administration to abide by current law. All Federal agencies are bound by certain rules when they outsource jobs. While the Department of Defense has its own set of rules, every other Federal agency, including the Veterans' Administration, is required to take the same straightforward steps to ensure that when outsourcing occurs, which sometimes it needs to, it actually improves upon the status quo, not outsourcing for the sake of outsourcing or to feed private contractors but outsourcing to serve taxpayers and, in the case of the VA, veterans better. If any Federal agency should be required to show a good reason before displacing Government workers, it should be the Veterans' Administration. That is because so many VA employees are actually veterans themselves. Arbitrarily firing veterans is not only wrong, it is shortsighted. The obstacles to employment are steep enough for veterans in too many cases without throwing unjustifiable outsourcing into the mix.

Even if we put that aside, taxpayers are not well served when Government contracts are handed out without regard to the costs or benefits that result. That is one of the many lessons we should have learned from Katrina. It is a lesson we are learning over and over from Iraq. These lessons don't seem to be sinking in with the administration. The VA is firing many of its blue-collar workers and replacing them with private contractors without going through the competition process that Congress has called for again and again. It is bad enough that the VA is moving forward without actually figuring out what is in the best interest of taxpayers. Sometimes outsourcing jobs makes sense. More often than not, as we have found, it doesn't. But that question should be asked before any outsourcing is done in every single case.

Making matters worse, four-fifths of the blue-collar jobs targeted for outsourcing were held by veterans. So the Veterans' Administration is outsourcing Government jobs held by veterans to go to private contractors without proving that it is actually saving money. This is more than a paycheck or a path to independence. Sidestepping the rules to eliminate their jobs is bad business and bad policy.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2642, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2642) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

AMENDMENT NO. 2687

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong opposition to the Coleman amendment No. 2687. The amendment requires the use of emergency Federal funds paid by taxpayers from every State for security at the 2008 Presidential political party conventions in Minneapolis and Denver. If the amendment passes, both the Republican and Democratic political party conventions will each receive \$50 million additional in Federal taxpayer dollars for State and local law enforcement costs associated with hosting the conventions. The \$50 million for the Minneapolis convention is on top of the \$12.5 million in Federal funds the State also will receive in the current version of the Commerce-Justice-State appropriations bill. This is all on top of \$70 million each party receives to host their conventions and run their political campaigns.

Spending an additional \$100 million in taxpayer funds for political conventions in Minneapolis and Denver is pretty outrageous to me. States that bid to host political conventions know that winning the bid also means a high cost for security comes with it. Sure, the cost of security after September 11 has gone up, but States and cities that bid on the 2008 conventions knew that burden at the get-go.

Plus, the States will receive an enormous benefit from hosting the conventions. I have not heard one person say that the States or cities hosting the