

and Albania—exceed the agreed-upon ratio of 2 percent of gross domestic product to be spent on defense.

Two decades after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the U.S. share of NATO defense spending has now risen astoundingly to more than 75 percent. Secretary Gates put all of our efforts under NATO alliance operations together at 75 percent. We are all aware that the United States is facing very hard and real serious fiscal constraints. Hence it is clear that we can no longer continue to pay for the vast majority of NATO operations that are not in the vital security interests of our Nation. It is time for the United States to ask our allies to step up and keep the agreement they made when they became part of NATO, or for the United States to consider reducing our spending level that we now provide to NATO and also move to redeploy a large portion of our military presence in Europe back to the United States.

I have spoken on the floor many times about my concerns for maintaining such a large military presence in Europe and I will continue to fight for spending cuts to a largely unnecessary and expensive U.S. military presence on the European continent. It was decided in the last administration to cut back to two brigade combat teams in Europe, in Germany. We have now had the two be expanded to four. The other two are now in limbo. So there are now four brigade combat teams in Europe. Two were supposed to move back to the United States and the military construction to house at least one of those has been done at a cost of over 400 million taxpayer dollars. So we have the capability to bring home troops, taxpayers have spent \$400 million in pursuit of that, the barracks sit empty, and we still have four brigade combat teams in Europe, in Germany.

Unfortunately, here is the message we are sending to our European allies by that military presence, and by our operations in support of NATO, that American taxpayers are willing and able to shoulder the burden for their defense, and that there are apparently no consequences if the Europeans fail to do their fair share.

We need to change that message. We need to make our Nation's current financial difficulties a priority. Our message should be that NATO has been a valuable alliance for 60 years, and it can be in the future, with a concerted effort by our allies to share the burden. That means truly sharing. The United States should lead when and where our capabilities are essential. We do have vast capabilities. When they are essential we have shown we will always be there. But others can lead where they have the capability to do so, and they need to do it with personnel and with the appropriate level of funding.

The complacency of our allies is increasingly a threat to our national security for we are shouldering more and more of the burden, even where our involvement is not in the vital interests

of the United States. The American taxpayer can no longer afford to write endless checks for NATO operations. It is time for our allies to shoulder their responsibilities and reduce their dependence on U.S. military forces.

We want to maintain our military strength. We have the greatest military in the world. There is no doubt about that. But to keep our military strong, we cannot over-deploy our forces. I have talked to people who have been to Afghanistan six times on rotations—six times. Most of our people who have gone to Afghanistan have gone more than once, and that is following all of the time they have been to Iraq as well. We must keep our military strong by not overburdening them because our allies are not doing their share and supplying the troops they agreed to provide when they became members of NATO. For us to keep the strength we have, or to handle the big operations where we have the unique capabilities, we must be smarter about allocating and sharing the responsibilities. We can continue to lead and take the biggest share, but not 75 percent of the share and continue to remain strong, especially with the financial constraints we have today.

We are in the midst of negotiating how we can lower our deficit so we don't hit that \$14 trillion debt ceiling without a plan for bringing down the deficit so we will never have to lift that debt ceiling again. So it is in everyone's interests for our allies to step up to the plate. They made agreements. It used to be a 3-percent gross domestic product commitment that was required for NATO. Now we are talking 2 percent, and only five countries—only five countries—meet that test. That is not a sustainable alliance. If we allow them to drag down their strongest member, it will not be in the interests of anyone if something big happens that requires an immediate and robust response.

So I appreciate that Secretary Gates, in his final days in office has talked very straight to our NATO allies. I hope they are listening, and I hope they are prepared to act. Yes, they have financial constraints too; we understand that. But it is time the burden be shared. It is time we have a real alliance in which we remain strong so we maintain the strength to respond to the big emergencies when we are called. Being dragged down by smaller contingencies that can be handled by others, whether it is Kosovo or Libya—and, certainly, we also are concerned about the situation in Syria and Yemen—we can let others be in the lead in those areas so that when the big things happen—such as Afghanistan which will continue to require our commitment—those major efforts can be led by the United States with our unique capabilities and our commitment.

Our military remains the best in the world. Our equipment is the best in the world. Our training is the best in the

world. We need to maintain that strength with an alliance that accepts its responsibility for burden sharing. Where we are required to lead and are uniquely capable we will do so but we cannot allow ourselves to be continually placed in the position where these contingencies drag down our capabilities for the future.

So I applaud Secretary Gates for starting this dialogue in earnest. We have talked about it for a long time—for years, actually. We have talked to our NATO allies about stepping up to the plate. Even in good financial times that didn't happen but for a few. I will say that Great Britain has always been there, and we have had other strong alliances, including Australia—not in NATO but certainly a strong ally. Canada is also a strong ally, but it is time for us to reassess our contributions in NATO to preserve our strength so that we are there and prepared for major operations, which is in all of our interests.

Thank you, Madam President. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 6 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. HAGAN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 782

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am going to wait until the Senator from Illinois arrives before making a motion, but I wish to explain what I am going to do. I am going to make a motion when he does arrive.

I have an amendment. First of all, being the ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, I have more than just a passive interest in this EDA bill. But one of the things I have been trying to do is get people to understand we have all these

amendments, and a lot of these amendments have nothing to do with the Economic Development Administration. They have to do with everything else that is out there. In fact, I am guilty of the same thing. I have, I think, five unrelated amendments. They are all good stuff, things I wish to get through, and that seems to be what this bill is all about.

But under all these amendments there is a bill and there is a reason for introducing it. It is a foregone conclusion—I think we all understand if we were to pass the EDA bill out of here in any form similar to the way it was introduced, it would never pass the House, and that would be a done deal.

What I am going to attempt to do is—I am going to attempt today and tomorrow and however long it takes—to get an amendment in there that is going to provide oversight authority by the GAO. Through the audits and assessments, the GAO can ensure that the EDA grants are distributed, and put some spending discipline in there, such as through a competitive award process—it is all drafted in the amendment; by the way, the amendment is No. 459—and in accordance with the EDA criteria and requirements.

Additionally, the GAO would submit a report every year to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the House T&I Committee, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, to have efficiency assured.

What we are doing here is, instead of having a jump ball and saying we are going to do any kind of an EDA program that we can sell through the administration, we will actually have discipline in there so it will have to be, first of all, gone over with the Government Accountability Office. Then, after that, it is not over because it has to come back to both committees in the House and the Senate. And, of course, I am the ranking member, and by the time that gets started, I may end up being the chairman, if it is after the next election. But you never know those things. So we would be able to look at it again.

The purpose of the amendment is to make certain that grant recipients are determined based on competitive procedures and to create more accountability for the EDA. Overall, I think Washington bureaucrats should not be picking winners and losers but, instead, rely on a formula and strict rules to determine where agency dollars flow.

I know we are not on the bill now. We are still in morning business. I understand we are going to go back on the bill at 6 o'clock this evening. But I have to get a request in that my amendment be—at that time, I am going to ask that the pending amendment be set aside for consideration of amendment No. 459, which I have just described.

I think the chief complaint about some of the EDA process—by the way, I have to say about the EDA process, it

has done so well in my State of Oklahoma. We had one project in Elgin, OK—a very small community adjacent to the live range at Fort Sill—for a \$2.25 million EDA grant. They ended up planning to construct a 150,000-square foot building that would employ—the numbers were almost the entire population of Elgin, OK. It is something that would revive that part of the State. The southern part of the State of Oklahoma and the south central part have historically been an area that is somewhat impoverished, and through these EDA grants we have done a good job.

The good thing about EDA grants is they require a lot of local participation. Generally, it is through the city funds, the State funds, and the county funds, and then an equal amount or a greater amount from the private sector.

In my State of Oklahoma, the grants are usually about one to nine in terms of public participation. So the program is good. I am the first one to admit, however, it may not work the same way in every State. I can only say what our experience has been in Oklahoma.

What I am going to suggest with this amendment is something we are doing anyway in Oklahoma. We are going through a competitive award process. That is a process that everyone understands. It is one that is all outlined in our rules. We know what they have to go through for competition. Then it is in accordance with the criteria.

The criteria is very important. One of these days we are going to get around to a transportation reauthorization bill that will come out of my same committee. The last one we had was in 2005. Since then, that has run out, and we are going kind of month to month. We have a dire need for infrastructure in America with the roads, highways, and bridges. It is something we have fallen behind on, and we are going to be getting to that.

The reason our 2005 bill was so successful in infrastructure for transportation in the reauthorization bill is because we had a formula. The formula took into consideration money to be spent on bridges and roads and highways, State by State, with such factors as to the fatalities in that State, the number of road lanes, miles, and all this criteria. When we got through establishing the criteria in 2005, it must have been good because nobody liked it. If it was something that upset everyone, then, obviously, it was one that was pretty good, and we passed it. That was a \$284.6 billion reauthorization bill. We should be able to do something comparable now.

You might say, everyone is goosey about spending money nowadays. And that is understandable with the deficits. President Obama's three budgets have suggested and have put into effect \$5 trillion of deficit—not debt but deficit.

This last budget was around a little over \$2.5 trillion. And I can remember

back in 1995, back when President Clinton was in office, going down to the floor and complaining because he had a budget to run the entire country of \$1.5 trillion. Well, the deficit alone in the last budget we have had here, as prescribed by the President, has exceeded the amount it took to run the country during that period of time.

I see the Senator from Illinois is here. I would say to my good friend from Illinois, what I am doing here is I am going to attempt now—and it will be objected to, and I understand that because we are not on the bill yet—I am going to continue to attempt to have an accountability amendment that takes the EDA process and subjects it to a competitive award process, along with oversight by the GAO and by our committee and by the T&I Committee in the House of Representatives. I think it is something that would make—frankly, if we do not do it, in my opinion, there would be no way in the world that the House of Representatives would pass it. This offers discipline to it. I will go so far as to say that if we are not able to pass this amendment, to have accountability, I will probably end up voting against the bill if it comes up for a vote.

So with that in mind, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to resume consideration of S. 782 so that I can call up my amendment No. 459 which is at the desk.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

MR. DURBIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, what I am about to say is no reflection on the Senator from Oklahoma nor the merits of his amendment. We have almost 100 amendments filed and 17 pending, and the majority leader has asked that we at least reflect on those filed and set our schedule accordingly. I am not saying this will not be considered, but at the moment we are going to object to the offering of additional amendments. So I do object.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

MR. INHOFE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

MR. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRADE AGREEMENTS

MR. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, while it is important to address the Federal budget deficit, too many Washington politicians have turned a blind eye to the U.S. trade deficit. Working families in Ohio and our Nation's manufacturers haven't forgotten about the devastating effects of our ballooning trade deficit.

How much bigger does our trade deficit need to get before Washington