

them because they are trying to help him make the right decision, and they are the real experts here.

If the President will not act decisively against our adversaries abroad, Congress must do all it can do to guard against the enemy here at home. Passing appropriations bills that provide the resources for Federal, State, and local law enforcement is part of our responsibility. We need to make sure our first responders and law enforcement community have the resources they need, and I hope we get that done soon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

VIEQUES TRAINING RANGE

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, on Wednesday we are going to be voting on something significant, which has been a source of discussion recently, and I wanted to put a little different perspective on the problems that are in Puerto Rico right now. Puerto Rico has \$90 billion worth of debt right now. They say they can't repay it in full. I think a bunch of guys have done a good job in establishing a solution for that. Puerto Rico is scheduled—and is going to be missing—to have another debt payment, which is going to put that amount over \$90 billion.

This week, the Senate will consider legislation that will impose an oversight board that will set up the bankruptcy court restructuring process. It is important citizens of Puerto Rico and the residents of Vieques realize they still have an opportunity to play a significant role in the nation's defense—a role that could bring an economic investment of hundreds of millions of dollars to Puerto Rico.

In April of 1999, following an accident on the Vieques training range—Vieques is a little island off of Puerto Rico—that resulted in the death of a Navy civilian employee, all training activities on that range were suspended. They had been training on that range for 60 years, and they suspended it. Despite the efforts of Congress and the Department of Defense leadership to include approving additional funding to hold a referendum on Vieques, as well as increased funding per year if Vieques remained open, the Navy was forced to end all training operations in 2003. After 60 years of that arrangement, they had to suspend it. When that happened, we had to close Roosevelt Roads.

I remember when they were considering whether they were going to close Roosevelt Roads, I made the comment that they would be closing it. You guys need to quit rejoicing that you had the

benefit of that because Roosevelt Roads was only there to support the Vieques training range. When the Navy left Vieques and closed Roosevelt Roads, they took with them over 2,500 uniformed military personnel, over 2,000 family members, and impacted more than 2,500 civilian employees. The total economic impact from the Navy was estimated to be over \$300 million a year in 2003 when the Navy ended its operations. I recall when that happened. I was there, and I made the statement that you are going to have financial ruin on the island, and it all started when we were told we were not allowed to continue what we had been doing in Vieques.

Today, as in 1999, our military is facing a readiness crisis and needs ranges like Vieques to train in full-spectrum joint operations.

On September 2, 1999, as chairman of the subcommittee—at that time, I was the chairman of a subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee called the Readiness Subcommittee—I held a hearing on the military requirement for Vieques and the assessment of alternative sites that could replace Vieques. During the hearing, ADM William Fallon, who was the commander of the Navy's Second Fleet at that time, and Gen. Peter Pace, who was the commander of the Marine Corps at that time, testified before the committee I chaired that Vieques was a unique facility. It was the only one located in the Atlantic where realistic combat training could be conducted in a combined and coordinated manner. The only Navy live-fire land, complete with day-and-night capabilities, amphibious landing beach and maneuver areas, and the range had areas of low-traffic airspace and deepwater sea space, with underwater and electronic warfare ranges. That was the only one in the world.

The Navy-Marine Corps study examined 18 alternative sites, evaluating the availability of the air-to-ground live ordnance range, with realistic targets and airspace for high-altitude deliveries, and for a naval surface fire support firing range, which permits the training of ships, forward spotters, and fire coordination teams, the ability for combat arms amphibious training, and nearby naval and air support facilities. We looked everywhere for that. We looked at 18 alternative sites. The study concluded that no single site evaluated was able to accomplish all of the training that was conducted at Vieques. The study also considered apportioning the training to various alternative locations but included the piecemeal approach—and this is using their language now—it “significantly degrades training to support the effective integration and coordination of all combined arms.” We are talking about the Marine Corps and the Navy. The Marine Corps is going in and bombing and the Navy has their planes up there and it is all taking place at one time.

To fully understand the capabilities of Vieques and the potential to conduct

Vieques training at other training sites, I visited Vieques and all 18 alternative sites around the world, as well as additional training sites that were used by the Department of Defense that are actually here in the United States. The sites I visited included Cape Wrath in northern Scotland; Capa Tulado in Sardinia; Mona and Dog Islands in the Caribbean; Kennedy County in Texas; Pinecastle, Avon Park, Pensacola, Eglin, and Tyndall in Florida; Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune in North Carolina; Townsend in Georgia; and San Clemente in California. That is a lot of sites, and I went to all of them. None of the locations had the capability to meet the training requirements of the Navy and Marine Corps and would have placed additional restrictions due to lack of training availability for training days, sea and airspace restrictions, proximity to large populated areas, live-fire restrictions, weather, and an inability to conduct combined operations, such as air, land, and sea operations simultaneously—no place.

I also visited the John F. Kennedy Battle Group and the *Wasp*, and learned that live-fire training is essential for our Nation's ability to safely and effectively conduct combat operations, but by not allowing our forces to train using live ordnance in a realistic combined operation at sea, we are putting our military personnel at risk during actual combat operations.

Numerous DOD officials have testified before our committee and reported that the loss of training at the Vieques range has resulted in the loss of critical combat training essential to the Nation's Navy and Marine forces and would increase the risk to our sailors and marines. In fact, it did. These very brilliant people, the top military officials, talked about how many of our troops and how many of our Americans had to die as a result of the loss of that training area.

RADM Kevin Moran, the Navy commander who oversaw operations throughout the Caribbean, compared combined live training to practice for a football team. He explained that coaches could routinely do basic training for quarterbacks separate from the linemen and separate from the defense. They could train everybody individually, but—this is his quote—“at some point you have to bring them together before the big game. It's [Vieques] the only place we can do that.”

Secretary Richard Danzig, who was then the Secretary of the Navy, said: “Only by providing in preparation can we fairly ask our servicemembers to put their lives at risk.”

Admiral Johnson, then-Chief of Naval Operations, and General Jones, who was the Commandant of the Marine Corps, said that Vieques provides integrated live-fire training “critical to our readiness,” and the failure to provide for adequate live-fire training for our naval forces before deployment will place those forces at an unacceptably high risk during the deployment.

CAPT James Stark, Jr., who was at that time commanding officer of the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, said:

When you steam off to battle you're either ready or you're not. If you're not, that means casualties and that means more POWs. That means less precision and longer campaigns. You pay a price for all this in war, and that price is blood.

Admiral Murphy, then commander of the Sixth Fleet in the Navy, said the loss of training on Vieques would "cost American lives."

On March 12, 2001, five people died in Kuwait when a U.S. aviator dropped three 500-pound bombs off target. They missed their target, and some comments in the report of the incident point to the lack of live-fire training. The commander and deputy commander state that they actively sought opportunities for that training, but the limiting factor was range availability. In other words, they took away the live-fire capability at Vieques and we have five dead soldiers.

What we were talking about then is true today. We put American lives at risk unnecessarily if they are not fully trained prior to combat operations. The success or failure of our military when sent into combat is a direct function of the degree of realistic training they receive before combat. Their ability to conduct live, joint operations is critical to battlefield success, and preservation of the ranges at which our military trains ensures that success.

We have to ensure that our military is prepared for the next fight against a near-peer competitor. We have more near-peer competitors now than we have ever had in the history of this country. That will demand a full strength of our joint force.

There is still no range like Vieques. This happened 15 years ago. It is still the only range with land and sea and airspace that could accommodate naval surface, aviation, and live artillery ordnance delivery with amphibious landings supported by naval fires, all conducted in a joint training environment.

I understand firsthand both the importance and the significance of having a range in your home State.

On May 3, there was a program—I keep forgetting the name of it, but it is Crossfire—where they had two different people, a liberal and a conservative. I have been on that program several times, but this was way back in 2000.

I was debating a guy who was a Congressman from New York who was wanting to close the Vieques training site. As we went down to the end of that, he said: Well, look, Senator, how would you like to have a live fire training area in your State of Oklahoma?

I said: Let me tell you about Fort Sill. At Fort Sill, we have 320 days out of the year—24 hours a day—that we have a live range going. It is within a town of about 100,000 people, and nobody complains about it. In fact, they talk about the explosions, the ordnance that are going off all the time, and they say: "It is the sound of freedom."

I will tell you something kind of interesting. It wasn't long ago that down in Lawton they built—that is the city right next to the live range at Fort Sill—they built what is declared to be the best elementary school in America. When you walk through it, you can't believe there could be a school like that. Well, anyway, there is, and they named it "Freedom Elementary School" after the sound of freedom. There are places where people in this country really want to do things that carry their end of it, and that was so significant.

Anyway, Fort Sill has a live range that operates 320 days a year and nobody complains about it.

So I think we have an opportunity to help Puerto Rico. We can do that—help them as a nation—and a program they put together for Wednesday is pretty decent. It is something that can be done. But at the same time—and I talked to the individuals who put that plan together. I said: As soon as we vote on that, let's go back and tell—since Puerto Rico has had a shock treatment with the economic problems they have had—tell them: If you guys really want to make a contribution, you can do it. You can make a contribution of something that will save American lives.

We have had people testify that when we went into Bosnia and Kosovo, that in both Bosnia and Kosovo, we lost American lives because we didn't have the training only the Vieques can give us. As I mentioned, all around the world—I will always remember when Governor Rossello came in and was complaining about all the environmental concerns and said: We are going to close Vieques as a range. And he said to me, because I was pushing it so hard—he made the statement: Don't ever come into Puerto Rico because you won't come out of there alive. And I went there the next day and I am alive.

So, anyway, that is a serious thing, and I really do think we can support the bill on Wednesday and then after that talk to them in a very reasonable way to let them know what kind of a contribution they can make to the training of their people, as well as our people, to offset what we lost way back 15 years ago. I believe that is something we are now primed to talk to them about. They ought to be ready after all of this. So that is something to come, and I would like to have anyone thinking about the vote that takes place, which I will support on Wednesday, that now you have an opportunity to actually provide a service that is going to save American lives.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF ROBERT ROSSITER

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise to speak in strong support of Bob Rossiter, who has been nominated to fill the vacancy on Nebraska's Federal district court.

The Judiciary Committee approved the nomination of Bob Rossiter without objection last October, and I am extremely pleased that the Senate will be voting on his nomination this evening.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska has a tradition of fairness and of justice. This court owes its reputation to the well-respected judges who have served on it.

With only three judgeships, Nebraska's Federal district bench is relatively small. Nebraska's Federal bench is an example of efficiency, as well as integrity. It also has one of the busiest dockets in the country.

For example, during the 12-month period ending March 31, 2016, Nebraska had the most per-judgeship weighted filings among the eight States that have only three authorized judgeships in a single Federal district.

With a small bench and a full docket, it is important that Nebraska's Federal district court operate at full capacity. As soon as Judge Bataillon announced that he would be taking senior status, I began working with Senator Mike Johanns to select a highly qualified candidate for this important position. Through an open process, we considered many applicants with excellent credentials. Approximately 20 individuals asked to be considered for this position, and we had each of them fill out the Judiciary Committee's lengthy questionnaire.

The questionnaires and the reams of supplementary materials were then carefully reviewed. Having reviewed the qualifications and materials of these applicants, I can tell you that Nebraska has no shortage of principled and sharp legal minds. Narrowing the list was challenging. After weeks of thorough consideration, we agreed to recommend Bob Rossiter to President Obama for this judgeship in August 2014. Although Senator Johanns retired from the Senate before the President nominated Mr. Rossiter in June of 2015, I know he was pleased with this nomination.

I thank the President for listening to my advocacy for Mr. Rossiter and for his support for him, for even among the many fine candidates we interviewed, Bob's accomplishments stood out.

Bob has an impressive list of professional achievements. After graduating cum laude from Creighton University School of Law, Bob clerked for U.S. district court judge C. Arlen Beam on Nebraska's Federal district court. Currently, he is a partner at the law firm of Fraser Stryker in Nebraska. Whether Bob is working on Federal and State