

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

Today we again consider the FY 96 Defense Authorization Bill. We are voting on this bill again today because the President vetoed the first bill the Congress sent to him. President Clinton vetoed the first defense authorization bill because of his insistence that America remain vulnerable to ballistic missiles carrying weapons of mass destruction -- and because of his insistence that American soldiers be permitted to serve under the blue flag of the United Nations. I believe that the White House is wrong on both accounts. Defending America should be the number one defense priority. The U.N. Secretary General is no substitute for the Commander-in-Chief. I know that many of my colleagues, including the Republican members of the Armed Services Committee agree with me.

Because the annual defense authorization bill is critical for the operations of the Department of Defense and contains many provisions crucial to the well-being of the men and women of our armed forces, the distinguished Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Thurmond, crafted a bill that would be signed by the President. The distinguished Chairman was assisted, in particular, by the distinguished Senator from Mississippi, Senator Lott, in negotiating the compromise on ballistic missile defense provisions.

Provisions To Support Men & Women in Uniform

With respect to those provisions that will support our men and women in uniform, the bill we sent to the President last month included a number of quality of life initiatives. The bill authorized a 2.4% pay raise and a 5.2% increase in allowance for quarters. In addition, for the reserve components, the bill authorized an income insurance program for involuntarily mobilized reservists and established a dental insurance program. These provisions will enhance the readiness of our reserve component forces -- who, like their active counterparts, have deployed to Bosnia.

Additionally, the bill contained a new military housing privatization initiative. This initiative will allow the Department of Defense to utilize new approaches to reduce the family housing backlog. To further enhance the quality of life of our troops, the agreement increased the military construction funding by \$480 million. Apparently, meeting the basic needs of the Americans who have dedicated their lives to defending our nation, was not sufficient reason for approving the defense authorization bill.

In order to ensure the readiness of our forces, the conferees added over \$1 billion to the operations & maintenance accounts. Furthermore, they increased research & development and procurement funding. This is the only way to ensure the long-term readiness of our forces.

Some Key Missile Defense Provisions Remain

As for the ballistic missile defense provisions in the bill, the comprehensive approach to defending America from ballistic missile attack adopted in the original conference report did not survive as a whole. The provision establishing a deployment goal of 2003 for a national missile defense system was dropped in the

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aftermath of the President's veto. Furthermore, the provisions regarding demarcation between strategic and theater missile defense were watered down also in face of white house objections -- despite the fact that these provisions reflected the very proposal originally made by the Clinton administration to the Russians. In short, the Clinton administration has made a conscious decision to make our Theater Missile Defense (TMD) systems less capable and subject to a Russian veto.

On the other hand, this bill does retain the provisions establishing a core program in the area of Theater Missile Defense, which includes THAAD and Navy Upper Tier -- two of our most capable TMD systems. These systems are also required to be deployed by specific dates -- in an attempt to ensure against repeated administration attempts to delay their deployment. Critical to both theater missile defense and national missile defense is the Brilliant Eyes Program. Under this bill, an Initial Operational Capability (IOC) of 2003 for the Brilliant Eyes Space Sensor is also established. This will facilitate earlier deployment of a national missile defense system.

It is indeed regrettable that the President was unwilling to join with us in supporting all of our initiatives related to the defense our country, our citizens and our allies. Once again, President Clinton has demonstrated his preference for cold war-era arms control treaties, and multilateral sensibilities. Once again, the President has revealed where our nation's future security fits on his list of priorities.

Continue to Press Forward on National Missile Defense System

But, let the White House be warned: we have agreed to this bill in order to support U.S. forces -- many of whom are deployed overseas -- not to support ill-conceived and short-sighted administration policies. This bill reflects the Republican-led Congress' commitment to equipping and training our forces to guarantee their overwhelming superiority on the battlefield. We have taken steps so our military -- though smaller -- will maintain their ability to project power around the world -- quickly and decisively. We have not given up on our goal of defending America. We will continue to press forward on a national missile defense system.

I understand that the Secretary of Defense has recommended the president sign this bill and that the president intends to do so. In closing, I again want to commend Senator Thurmond for his hard work on this bill.

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