

*Bob Dole*



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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## C-17

### DOLE LEADS SENATE TO PASS BILL AUTHORIZING MULTI-YEAR CONTRACT FOR C-17 PRODUCTION; LEGISLATION PROVIDES SAVINGS FOR AMERICAN TAXPAYER & INCREASED CAPABILITIES FOR AIR FORCE

I am pleased that the Senate has passed today legislation authorizing the Air Force to enter into a multi-year contract for the procurement of the C-17 Globemaster III, the world's newest and finest strategic air lifter.

While the legislation is simple -- authorizing a multi-year contract -- it is critically important. In short, it allows the Air Force to more rapidly improve its ability to project U.S. power anywhere in the world. In this time of shrinking budgets and growing demands, we must set priorities for modernization of our military forces -- C-17 is for me a top priority.

As my colleagues recall, earlier this year, President Clinton attempted to ram through the Congress a seven year multi-year contract authority. At the time, Senator Thurmond and I supported the idea of a multi year procurement authorization, but we thought the proposal could be improved in ways which would benefit the taxpayer, the Air Force, and the skilled workers who build the aircraft. That's exactly what the Committee has done. Under the legislation, the procurement of the C-17 will be expedited, resulting in greater savings for the American taxpayer, increased capabilities for the Air Force, and greater efficiency and stability for the industrial base.

The Armed Services Committee recently completed mark-up of its fiscal year 1997 Defense Authorization Bill. To take immediate advantage of the opportunities created by the multi-year procurement legislation, the Committee was able to add \$249 million in the FY 1997 bill to procure an additional aircraft this year and to provide long-lead funding for two more aircraft in FY 1998. As a result, the Air Force will be on a path which will move the last five aircraft of the contract up to the first three years, saving the tax payer an additional \$300 million and creating a more efficient production schedule.

Army missions are up 300% since the end of the Cold War, yet the number of troops forward-deployed is significantly down. Our force is smaller and is CONUS-based. Now, more than ever, sufficient strategic air lift is absolutely essential for the success of our military. However, even with the Pentagon's planned buy of 120 C-17s, the Department of Defense will be unable to meet its minimum strategic airlift requirement of 49.4 million-ton-miles-per-day between fiscal 1997 and fiscal 2004. By expediting the procurement of the C-17, we are helping to fill that void. In my view, it is clear that America will need more than 120 C-17s to meet our needs.

Clearly the legislation is both critical to the needs of the Department of Defense and good for the American taxpayer. I commend the Armed Services Committee for their efforts in crafting this legislation.

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