

FLOOR STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRYOR AMENDMENT

SENATOR PAUL E. TSONGAS

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I rise in support of this bill introduced by my colleagues from Arkansas.

I find the circumstances very distressing when Congress must necessarily pass or threaten to pass legislation that in effect amounts to micro-managment of the Department of Defense. Now, in peacetime, we can simply call the Pentagon's weapons operational testing and procurement practices gross, costly, mismanagement. In wartime, with Americans being killed on battlefields because their weapons failed to operate, we would call it gross, costly, criminal negligence. By that time it is too late for effective, corrective legislative action.

On July 12, the Senate passed an amendment introduced by Senator Dole. That amendment only calls for a report to Congress from the Secretary of Defense in every case where he intends to obligate funds to commence or carry out full-scale production of a weapon system which has not yet successfully completed operational testing.

The Dole Amendment is a good idea; however, it is not a solution to the problem. It amounts to putting a coat of paint on a building that is infested by termites. It may look good, but when put to use, will collapse.

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What the Dole Amendment does not address is the institutional practices in the Pentagon that permits the so-called operational testing and reporting by the very people who have the most interest in seeing the weapon go into full-scale production - the R & D people.

We continue to see reports that weapons, both old and new, are not reliable or effective and that their costs are constantly expanding. I believe it is time to take important steps to address this most serious situation. What do I tell the parents of soldiers killed in combat because their weapons failed to work -- It's okay because the Pentagon said his weapon was procured with "maximum efficiency and cost reduction". We do not need more buzz words, we need reports that say it is the right weapon for the job and the weapon works under combat conditions as it was designed to.

Under this legislation, operational testing and evaluation would be given priority and resources necessary to ensure that weapons systems undergo thorough examination and review. In doing so, the testing function would be elevated in the defense hierarchy to allow the combat users a louder voice in production decisions. Most importantly, we believe this legislation could help restore the confidence of our fighting men and our constituents.

The mere threat of passage of this legislation has prompted response from Pentagon officials. Richard D. DeLauer, the Under-secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, has reacted by lobbying hard against the legislation and, in attempt to dampen



criticism, promised to strengthen the testing program without congressional mandate. Typically, without providing numbers, DeLauer promised more staff and more funds for the testing office, independent reports from the office to Congress, and a vote for the testing chief on the council that advises the secretary on weapons purchases. Then he added that weapon testing and purchasing must be coordinated within the same agency for "maximum efficiency and cost reduction." That is precisely the reason this legislation is imperative. Purchasing and testing must be separated.

Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Thayer, has acknowledged that the Pentagon suffered from "waste and abuse" and other mismanagement. In addition, he has said "Yes, there is waste and abuse in the Department of Defense, and I guess there always will be."

The foregoing reaction from Messrs. DeLauer and Thayer hardly promotes confidence building; their reactions call for more scrutiny of other Pentagon activities.

Clearly, the Department of Defense is not entirely to blame for our present predicament. Congress must ultimately be held responsible, for it is we who are charged with the authorization of programs, appropriation of funds, and oversight. When established, this new weapons operational testing agency will report directly not only to the Secretary of Defense, but also to Congress. These reports will not be altered by program managers who have a vested career interest in seeing their projects go into full-scale production. Should the amendment not prove strong enough to overcome

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Pentagon bureaucratic inertia within a reasonable test period, I would then propose that operational testing be removed from the jurisdiction of the Pentagon altogether. The Senate is putting the Department of Defense on notice.