

be rejected in a very serious way. Now, the issues that our colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL), has raised, are major policy decisions that need to be made, but this is not the bill to do so.

I would suggest to the gentleman that he should go to the Committee on International Relations or he should go to the Committee on Armed Services to deal with the issues that he has raised. He deserves a debate on those issues but not on this bill. This is an appropriations bill, this is not a bill where policy is set. And so I ask the Paul amendment be rejected in a very strong and serious way.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. All time for debate on this amendment has expired.

The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL).

The question was taken; and the Chairman pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 450, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas will be postponed.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. TAYLOR OF MISSISSIPPI

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi:

To restrict funding for in excess of 300 U.S. military personnel in Colombia.

On page 80 after line 11, insert the following new section:

SEC. . None of the funds made available by this Act may be expended for the support of in excess of 300 United States military personnel in Colombia.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of Wednesday, March 29, 2000, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) and a Member opposed each will control 10 minutes.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise to claim the time in opposition.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) claims the time in opposition.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR).

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I ask my colleagues, Mr. Chairman, for a few minutes to try to remember what it was like before we all got caught up in which party we are in and which committee chairman is for something and which committee chairman is against it, and try to remember why I think all of us ran for this office. It was to do good things and to keep bad things from happening.

It is the second point that I would like to discuss today, because I think that the needless loss of an American service person is quite possibly the worst thing that can happen.

The amendment that I am offering today is an effort to keep a bad thing from needlessly happening. Colombia is a dangerous place. The FARC and the ELN, the two primary guerilla groups, now control better than 40 percent of the Colombian countryside. They are well financed, they are well armed, they are well trained. And in increasing instances, they are working in large units to overwhelm Colombian army outposts; and just this week killed about 30 Colombian policemen.

In my opinion, they threaten the Nation of Colombia. And yet the political leaders of Colombia in the past year have reduced their defense spending. The political leaders of Colombia in the past couple of months have actually changed their law so that people who hold a high school diploma are no longer eligible for the draft in Colombia. In private conversations with their business leaders, they tell me, yes, there are taxes on the books, but they do not pay them. And I suspect that they are expecting someone else's kid to defend their country.

Mr. MURTHA. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. MURTHA. We have no problem on this side with the amendment.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman and assure him I will go quickly.

Usually it is some poor uneducated kid from the Colombian countryside, and I get every indication that they expect American kids to fight in a war they will not fight in and the American taxpayers to pay for a war that they will not pay for.

It is with some hesitation that I will vote to help them with America's money and equipment. I will not, however, vote to send America's sons and daughters off to fight a war in Colombia that the sons and daughters of Colombia and their political leaders often will not fight in.

This amendment would limit America's troop strength in Colombia to 300 military personnel. In a hearing before the House Committee on Armed Services last week on Colombia, General Charles Wilhelm, the United States Commander in Chief of the Southern Command, was told of my reservations and asked if he would agree to a troop limitation. His response was:

Would I be willing, as the Commander in Chief of the United States Southern Command, to subscribe to a properly considered and developed troop cap for Colombia? I certainly would. Categorically, yes.

That was 1 week ago today.

I am asking my colleagues to put such a cap on American troop strength in Colombia. Should it be the will of the majority of this House to break

that cap, then it should be done in a deliberate manner and by a vote of this body, and not something that some president on a whim gets us involved in.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I think that this amendment is an important one because it helps point out the fact that the strategic thought on the fight against drugs is being directed in the wrong place.

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What should happen and should, of course, come from the Colombian military and their government is to put a stop to the traffic, the drug traffic coming across the Andes by air as the Peruvians stopped, and through the three, and only three, mountain passes through the Andes. Instead, we might find ourselves enmeshed in a civil war, going after one-third of the guerillas who, of course, are being supported by the drug trafficking.

The proposed strategy is a 6-year strategy; that should not be. It should be one where you shoot down the airplanes as they fly over the Andes and stop up the three passes and then should we look at assisting in going after the guerillas if that be our policy. Let us go the first things first.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I yield our 10 minutes for purposes of control to the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Without objection, the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) will control 10 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, as my colleague, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA), indicated we are not going to have any problem with this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to my friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BATEMAN).

Mr. BATEMAN. Mr. Chairman, I thank the distinguished gentleman (Mr. LEWIS of California) for yielding me this time. I do not rise in opposition to this amendment. I would not ask for a rollcall vote on this amendment.

I do have to tell my colleagues in the House that within the last hour, I have spoken to General Wilhelm; and General Wilhelm says that he does not believe this figure of a 300-person cap on military personnel in Colombia is realistic. And he does not know where it came from.

If there was going to be a cap, as he said in his statement before the committee, it should be properly considered and developed. This, I do not believe meets that test. I am not opposed