

March 29, 2000

2000 EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT

Statement of HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS

[Page: H1507]

Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to this bill. We have already appropriated \$1.7 trillion for this year's budget. We do not need to appropriate another \$9 billion.

It is said that we need to appropriate this money to fight the drug war in Colombia. We have been fighting the drug war for 25 years. We have spent \$250 billion on the drug war. Some day we will have to wake up and decide that the way we are fighting the drug war is wrong.

As a physician, I can tell my colleagues, it is a serious problem. There are a lot of people suffering from drug usage in this country. But if something does not work, why are we so determined to pursue a process that does not work?

Quite frankly, I am not sure the real reason why we are in Colombia has anything to do with drugs. I do concede a lot of individuals will be voting for this bill because of the belief that it might help. But it will not help. So we should reconsider it and think about the real reasons why we might be there.

I had an amendment that was not approved. But what I would have done, if I had had the chance, I would have taken all the money from the overseas spending, Kosovo, Bosnia, East Timor, and the funds now for this new adventure down in Colombia, and put it into building up our military defense. That is what we need. We need better salaries, better medical care, and we need better housing for our military personnel. But here we go spreading ourselves thinly again around the world by taking on a new adventure, which will surely lead to trouble and a lot of expense.

Members have referenced the 65 helicopters that will be sent to Colombia. There is one, I guess, cynical hope about what might happen with our involvement in Colombia. Usually when we get involved its only going to be for a short period of time. We were going to go into Bosnia for 6 months. We have been there 5 years. We were going to go to Kosovo for a short period of time. It is open-ended. We are in East Timor for who knows how long. And we will soon be in Colombia.

But there was one time where we backed away, we literally surrendered and ran with our tail between our legs because we went in with helicopters, and that had to do with Somalia. We sent our Blackhawk helicopters in there. We had two of them shot down in Mogadishu. We had two others that crash landed when they returned to the base. Within a couple weeks, we were out of there.

We did not send our Blackhawk helicopters into Kosovo because they would be shot down. Lets face it, it is not a good weapon. It will only lead to further involvement.

Who is going to fly the Blackhawk helicopters? Do my colleagues think the Colombians are going to fly them? You can bet our bottom dollar we are going to have American pilots down there very much involved in training and getting in much deeper than we ever should be.

So I think that, unfortunately, this could end up in a real mess. Maybe then we would have

enough sense to leave. But we, in the Congress, ought to have enough sense not to go down there. This money can be better spent on national defense. We should be concerned about national security.

When we get ourselves involved, whether it is the Persian Gulf or Bosnia or wherever, all we do is build up our enemies and expose ourselves more to terrorist attacks because we are not doing it in the name of security and resentment toward America builds.

Under the Constitution, we should have a strong national defense, and we should provide for national security. Going into Colombia has nothing to do with national security and serves to undermine national defense.

Even those who build helicopters are pretty blunt. One lobbyist said, 'It is business for us, and we are as aggressive as anybody. I am just trying to sell helicopters.'

What about the oil companies who support this war; which several oil companies do? Yes, they want investment security, so they want the military industrial complex to come down there and protect their oil interests. The oil interests are very supportive of this war, as well as the helicopter companies.

But the American people, if they were asked, they would decline. A recent poll by Zogby showed that, essentially, 70 percent of the American people answered no to this particular question: 'Should the U.S. help defend militarily such-and-such country even though it could cost American soldiers their lives?' It varied depending on which country. But, basically, 65 to 75 percent of the American people said no. The American people want us to mind our own business and not be the policeman of the world.

Can any Member come to this floor and absolutely assure us that we are not going to lose American lives in Colombia? We are certainly committing ourselves to huge numbers of dollars, dollars that we do not have, dollars that if we wanted to could come out of the current \$1.7 trillion budget we already have.

So I would suggest to my colleagues, let us reassess this. It is not really a war on drugs.

The war on drugs, by trying to reduce interdiction does not work. It has not worked. It is not going to work. It is only an excuse. It is an excuse for promoting military intervention in Colombia to satisfy those who are anxious to drill for oil there and for the military industrial complex to sell weapons.

It's amazing to me to see an administration who strongly opposes law abiding American citizens from owning guns for self defense to be such a promoter of the big guns of war throughout the world.

I ask for a `no' vote.