

For the last 230 years, the United States has evolved from a ragtag collection of determined colonials who were able to meet the most powerful military in the world to today being the most powerful Nation. There are many chapters to that story. It was achieved at tremendous cost in human life and sacrifice, many lessons that we have learned, sometimes painfully.

This long, rich, varied history created the power that is the United States today and is, frankly, too little understood. We have tallied and documented the casualties, the missing and the maimed; but it does not tell the full story.

Our Nation's military history has a footprint that extends across the country and across the globe. Our military is the largest user of energy in the world. It is the largest manager of infrastructure, but 250 years of fighting and training around the country and around the world has produced a toxic legacy today.

People have forgotten about the unexploded bombs used in training, the discarded munitions, particularly in times past when our country appeared so large, the installation so remote, and the challenges we faced so dire. The cleanup of our toxic legacy has always been left to the future. It is my hope today that Congress will send a signal that when it comes to the toxic legacy of the past, the future is now; we will no longer avoid our responsibilities and look the other way.

There are many reasons for addressing the cleanup other than just the arguments of the environmentalists. There are clear and conservative, fiscal and military imperatives. These problems do not go away. We have millions of acres that are off limits and potentially contaminated. There are vast challenges from yesterday's legacy. Until these dangers are cleaned up, the longer we wait, the greater the cost to the taxpayer through escalating costs, as munitions decompose, toxins migrate in the groundwater and memories fade as to where the bombs might be. Cleanup delayed inevitably makes cleanup more expensive as the problems get worse and inflation drives the prices higher.

Mr. Chairman, I had an amendment that I was seeking to offer that would do something about it, to be able to enable us to do a better job. The first thing we ought to have done was put one person in charge. My amendment would have established a separate line item for cleanup of UXO in the Defense appropriation bill, entitled "Military Munitions Response Program," separating UXO from the hazardous waste cleanup to provide the focus that the UXO efforts needed.

The amendment would also have established an assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Military Munitions Response to the Deputy Under Secretary for Defense Installations and Environment at the Department of Defense. I have been trying for the last 5 years to be able to help us get a handle on this by having one person in charge and be able to know exactly what the status is. Unfortunately, despite working through both the authorizing and the Committee on Appropriations, we still face the situation today where it is fractured, where no one person is in charge. I hope that our failure to act on this toxic legacy can be reversed.

I will not offer the amendment because I know that it would be ruled out of order, but I wanted to make the point as we are dealing with this massive bill.

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. MURTHA. Mr. Chairman, there is no one who has worked harder on this issue than the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. Blumenauer). The committee is very aware of it, and we put report language in to make sure to try and go in the direction the gentleman tried to. We made a slight increase in the amount of money available. We know it is a massive problem. This committee has been in the forefront of trying to address this problem. We appreciate the gentleman's concern. He has brought it to our attention over and over again, and we are doing the best we can.

We know some of the things the gentleman pointed out, we put into the language to say we have got to get it straightened out. So we appreciate the gentleman's hard work and dedication in trying to solve this very difficult problem.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's kind words. I appreciate the difficult task that his subcommittee has.

As I think of the challenges that we face, I cannot think of anybody with a more difficult challenge today, and my heart goes out to the difficulty my colleague has in terms of providing

for the needs of our constituents that are overseas.

But, as I say, I will not offer this amendment because I think it would be ruled out of order. I want to make the point that nobody in the Department of Defense to this day is in charge. There is no separate account that enables an appropriate accounting; and in the course of the debate this afternoon, I look forward to offering up some alternatives that may, in a small way, help my distinguished friends on this subcommittee who have what I truly believe is a difficult task; but I want Congress to no longer be missing in action on unexploded ordnance and military toxins that pollute millions of acres around this country. In fact, nobody knows how many are polluted.