



PRESS RELEASE

**House National Security Committee
Floyd D. Spence, Chairman**

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**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE
AS DELIVERED FOR
FLOOR CONSIDERATION OF H. CON. RES. 200**

September 24, 1996

Mr. Speaker, on June 25, 1996, a terrorist bomb attack against a government housing compound in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia resulted in the deaths of 19 American service members and the wounding of 200 others. This attack demonstrated that terrorism directed against Americans is a continuing threat and that our men and women in uniform are often at great risk because of the nature of their mission.

Today, the House has before it H. Con. Res. 200, a bill authored by my colleague and valued member of the House National Security Committee, Mr. Scarborough, that recognizes and honors the ultimate sacrifice paid by the 19 American service members who died in this cowardly attack. I believe this bill is a fitting tribute for the House to make and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Last week, the Committee on National Security held a hearing to review the Saudi terrorist bombing, the conclusions reached by the Department of Defense's own investigation, and the appropriate measures necessary to ensure that U.S. forces deployed abroad will be better prepared to deal with similar attacks in the future. The committee heard from Secretary of Defense Perry, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Shalikashvili, and retired General Wayne Downing, who headed the independent Task Force charged with investigating the bombing.

The conclusions of General Downing's study were consistent with the findings of our committee report, released last month. At this point, Mr. Speaker, I would ask unanimous consent to insert a copy of this report in the record following my statement.

Both reports noted the need for greater tactical intelligence on the terrorist threat to U.S. forces, both challenged the conduct of Operation Southern Watch as a temporary "contingency" mission when it is in reality a long-term operation, and both cited numerous institutional and organizational shortcomings that contributed to the tragedy that resulted in the deaths of 19 brave Americans. General

Downing's report also found fault at all levels of the chain of command — a conclusion accepted by Secretary of Defense Perry during his testimony before our committee.

Mr. Speaker, H. Con. Res. 200 properly notes that we have important and legitimate national security interests in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East that justify our continued presence. The bill also notes the danger posed to American national interests and personnel by the threat of global terrorism. I believe it deserves the unanimous support of all House members.

I want once again to commend the legislation's author, Mr. Scarborough, for his diligent efforts to bring this legislation to the House floor. Thanks to his commitment we are here today ensuring that the brave Americans whose lives were lost in the Khobar Towers bombing are never forgotten by this House.