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## STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS (Senate - January 20, 1995)

### NATCHEZ BLUFFS STABILIZATION LEGISLATION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation to authorize the Corps of Engineers to stabilize sections of the Natchez Bluffs. The deterioration of these bluffs has created a profound danger to both life and property.

These bluffs overlook the Mississippi River and are formed by loess soil, a very fine powdery substance that practically liquefies when it gets wet. Water has infiltrated this soil causing numerous and unexpected mudslides and sloughing. This has put the historic homes on the bluffs and at their base in jeopardy.

Natchez has a long and distinguished history. Not only was this area the ancestral home for the Natchez Indians; it is the oldest settlement in my State. In fact, it is the oldest settlement on the Mississippi River, even older than New Orleans or St. Louis. When my State was a territory, Natchez was our capital, and during the antebellum times it was a major center for cotton trading. Natchez has been designated as a national historical park. The Natchez Trace, which was a major inland trade route during colonial days, historically started at these bluffs.

Last year the National Trust for Historic Preservation put Natchez on its list of America's 'Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places.' To quote Richard Moe, president of the National Trust:

The National Trust strongly supports the authorization for the Army Corps of Engineers to stabilize the bluffs. These historic resources are some of the most outstanding in the United States, and they must not be lost when there is an available remedy to the threat.

In March 1980, there was a very serious slide at the Natchez Bluffs that killed two people and injured many more. Last year there was another slide which carried away a significant portion of the bluffs. Clearly, the bluffs are now past the point of makeshift repair measures which the State and the municipality have attempted. Now is the time to have the Government Federal engineer step in. The Corps of Engineers examined the current situation, and their most recent draft report characterizes the deteriorating condition as an emergency.

I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill and the idea behind it. Not just due to the imminent danger posed to life by the real possibility for additional slides, but also for preserving nationally recognized historic property. I introduced similar legislation last year as Senate bill 1492, that would do essentially the same thing.

I am pleased to be joined by Senator **Thad Cochran**, the senior Senator from my State, in cosponsoring this legislation to protect these historically significant properties and to prevent

potential loss of lives.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague, Senator **Lott**, in cosponsoring legislation which would authorize funds to stabilize the river bluffs at Natchez.

Two years ago, at my request, the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, in its fiscal year 1994 appropriations bill, asked the Corps of Engineers to undertake a technical study of the condition and possible stabilizing actions that could be taken. Last year, we asked the corps to prepare a second report focusing on updated cost estimates and, in light of more recent bad weather and deterioration, on the current severity of the situation. We have seen the corps' second report. In that report, the Corps of Engineers states what the Governor of Mississippi, the mayor of Natchez, and the people of Natchez have known and have been saying for some time: That the Natchez Bluff situation is an emergency.

Last October, the Natchez Democrat editorialized, 'Each day that passes without a remedy, sections of the bluffs become more precarious, threatening homes and businesses.' Natchez Bluffs is like a deteriorating health problem. Every day that goes by without action means that corrective action will be more complex and more expensive. And so, in this day when budget constraints are the watchword, it is even more imperative to move on truly important projects like this one without delay. More delay will mean more money. More delay will mean more hardship for the people of Natchez.

Therefore, I urge the Senate to approve this authorization for Corps of Engineers work in Natchez. Individuals homes, businesses, and important, historic sections of a grand old American city are at stake.

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By Mr. **DOLE** (for himself, Mr. **Lautenberg**, Mr. **Lieberman**, and Mr. **Simpson**):

S. 256. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to establish procedures for determining the status of certain missing members of the Armed Forces and certain civilians, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

## **MISSING SERVICE PERSONNEL ACT**

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, today I rise, with my colleagues, Senator **Simpson**, Senator **Lautenberg**, and Senator **Lieberman**, to introduce the Missing Service Personnel Act of 1995. This legislation is similar to that which was introduced last year but which the Congress was unable to consider before adjournment. The legislation would reform the Department of Defense's procedures for determining whether members of the Armed Forces should be listed as missing or presumed dead. Legislation pertaining to those missing in action has not changed in the past 50 years. Since the Vietnam war, the Department of Defense and the U.S. Government have been criticized for their handling of the POW/MIA issue. Some of that criticism is legitimate. Some of it has been brought upon the Government by its own actions or inactions. This bill attempts to correct most of those problems and establish a fair and equitable procedure for determining the exact status of such personnel. At the same time, it is my hope that we might restore some of the Department's credibility on this issue and rebuild faith and trust between the public and our Federal Government.