

STATEMENT
OF
ELAINE L. CHAO
DEPUTY MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR
OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE
HOUSE MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE
ON
H.R. 4046 AND H.R. 2161, BILLS
TO SET ASIDE CERTAIN SURPLUS VESSELS
FOR THE USE OF LIFE INTERNATIONAL

JULY 31, 1986

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE. MY NAME IS ELAINE L. CHAO AND I AM THE DEPUTY MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

IT IS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE THIS MORNING TO PRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE ADMINISTRATION WITH RESPECT TO H.R. 4046 AND H.R. 2161, BILLS THAT WOULD SET ASIDE CERTAIN SURPLUS VESSELS IN THE NATIONAL DEFENSE RESERVE FLEET (NDRF) FOR THE USE OF LIFE INTERNATIONAL, WHILE LIFE INTERNATIONAL ARRANGES FOR THE NECESSARY VOLUNTARY PERSONNEL AND FUNDING TO PROVIDE "HEALTH EDUCATION, TRAINING, CARE, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AS WELL AS OTHER HUMANITARIAN SERVICES, TO THE PEOPLES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES."

PUBLIC LAW 97-360 (96 STAT. 1718-1719) DIRECTED THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION TO DESIGNATE THE FOLLOWING THREE VESSELS IN THE NDRF AS HUMANITARIAN SERVICE CANDIDATES: THE USS GENERAL NELSON M. WALKER (P2-SE2-R1), THE USS DONNER (LSD-20), AND THE USS COLONIAL (LSD-18), GENERALLY FOR THE

USE OF LIFE INTERNATIONAL, A NONPROFIT CORPORATION ORGANIZED UNDER THE LAWS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. THAT ACT REQUIRES ANY USE OF THESE VESSELS BY LIFE INTERNATIONAL SHALL BE "AS AN ELEEMOSYNARY VESSEL PRIMARILY ENGAGED IN PROVIDING HEALTH EDUCATION, TRAINING, CARE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN SERVICES TO THE PEOPLES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES." THESE THREE SHIPS REMAIN IN THE NDRF. PUBLIC LAW 97-360 WILL EXPIRE BY ITS TERMS ON OCTOBER 22, 1987.

THE BILLS BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE THIS MORNING WOULD GENERALLY SET ASIDE CERTAIN OTHER VESSELS FOR THE USE OF LIFE INTERNATIONAL FOR A FOUR OR FIVE YEAR PERIOD. ADDITIONALLY, ONE OF THE BILLS, H.R. 4046, WOULD AUTHORIZE FUNDS FOR NOT MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF THE COST OF RETROFITTING THESE VESSELS.

M.R. CHAIRMAN, YOUR HEARING THIS MORNING DEMONSTRATES THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CONGRESS AGAIN TO ATTEMPT TO ASSIST LIFE INTERNATIONAL. PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION SHARES YOUR ADMIRATION FOR THE EFFORTS OF REV. ROBERT MEYERS AND LAUDS THE OBJECTIVES OF LIFE INTERNATIONAL. HOWEVER, WE CANNOT SUPPORT THIS PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

FOR ALMOST FOUR YEARS WE HAVE HELD IN THE NDRF THE THREE VESSELS SPECIFIED IN PUBLIC LAW 97-360. TO DATE, LIFE INTERNATIONAL HAS NOT REQUESTED THE TRANSFER OF ANY OF THESE VESSELS. AT THIS TIME, WE BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR LIFE INTERNATIONAL TO FOCUS ITS EFFORTS ON DEVELOPING WELL-DEFINED PLANS FOR THE FINANCING AND

OPERATION OF ONE VESSEL FOR THE PURPOSES SET FORTH IN EXISTING LEGISLATION. IT APPEARS THAT HOWEVER WELL INTENTIONED THEIR GOALS, LIFE INTERNATIONAL HAS BEEN UNABLE TO MOBILIZE WIDESPREAD PUBLIC SUPPORT.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY DONE ITS PART BY PROVIDING THE VESSELS THEMSELVES, AND WE DO NOT VIEW IT APPROPRIATE TO IMPOSE ADDITIONAL COSTS TO COVER TWO-THIRDS OF THE MONIES NEEDED FOR RETROFITTING THE THREE VESSELS DESIGNATED FOR USE BY LIFE INTERNATIONAL UNDER CURRENT LAW, AND THE THREE VESSELS WHICH WOULD BE DESIGNATED UNDER H.R. 4046. I ASSURE YOU THAT WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO CONTINUE COOPERATIVE EFFORTS WITH LIFE INTERNATIONAL, WITH A VIEW TO ACHIEVING THE PURPOSES OF PUBLIC LAW 97-360 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THAT CONCLUDES MY PREPARED STATEMENT. I WILL BE PLEASED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU OR THE MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE MAY HAVE.