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Message-ID: <435A5CEEACA6D211BEEA0008C75DA8850A8FF09E@hrml2.house.gov>
From: "Strider, Burns" <Burns.Strider@mail.house.gov>
To:
Subject: Shows to Defense: BUY AMERICAN
Date: Fri, 16 Mar 2001 11:28:45 -0500
Return-Receipt-To: "Strider, Burns" <Burns.Strider@mail.house.gov>
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Congressman Ronnie Shows
Mississippi's 4th Congressional District

Press Release
For Immediate Release

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Shows Shocked, Jobs Lost in Mississippi's 4th Congressional District Over
Last Eight Years and the Department of Defense Grants Contracts for Head
Gear to Communist China!

Congressman Ronnie Shows Says to Department of Defense: "BUY AMERICAN!"
after Learning that Lucrative Contracts for Head Gear are Going to Places
Such as Communist China

United States Department of Defense Grants Contracts to Foreign Powers for
Berets Totaling More than \$26 Million

[WASHINGTON] - Congressman Ronnie Shows today blasted the Department of
Defense for granting more than \$26 million in contracts to foreign powers
for the manufacturing of berets to be worn by American soldiers. These
contracts were granted to companies in China, Romania, Sri Lanka, India,
South Africa and Canada.

"American workers make the finest products on the planet," stated
Congressman Shows. "And, American workers have families to nurture and
raise. The Department of Defense has made a terrible mistake, I believe, in
deciding to ignore American workers and turn to companies in places like
Communist China in order to make the very headgear that will be worn by
American soldiers."

Over the 1990's, several thousand apparel and manufacturing jobs in the 4th
Congressional District of Mississippi were moved to Mexico and Canada by the
corporations who own the companies. "How can we have faith in a Defense
industry that ignores the very foundation of our nation and helps create
jobs in other nations that may very well lead to the loss of jobs in
Mississippi and across our nation," Shows added.

"China is a country whose leadership overtly tries to skirt US efforts to
halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction, all-the-while actively

conducting espionage against the US to acquire our weapons and high technology," Shows continued. "In addition, they imprison and torture religious and democratic leaders, suppress all forms of free speech, and continue to threaten the use of force against neighboring countries, many of them US allies."

Congressman Shows has joined with colleagues in firing off a letter to President Bush asking for immediate action to reverse this decision by the Department of Defense. What follows are excerpts of the letter to President Bush signed by Congressman Shows:

Letter to President Bush Signed by Shows: "We are writing to express our deep concerns about the decision of the Army Chief of Staff to purchase over 2.5 million berets from companies that will manufacture these items in foreign countries. As you know, on October 17, 2000, Army Chief of Staff Major General Eric Shinseki issued a change in uniform policy for all Army personnel, ordering that each individual soldier be outfitted with a black beret by June 14, 2001. The decision to outfit all soldiers -- not just Army Rangers -- with a black beret has been very controversial. The purpose of this letter is not to comment on the wisdom policy change, but to protest the procurement procedures that have been put into place.

"Specifically, we have major reservations about the Pentagon's decision to grant a waiver for foreign acquisition of over 2.5 million berets to companies which are manufacturing the headgear in the People's Republic of China, Romania, Sri Lanka, India, South Africa, and Canada. These contracts reportedly total over \$26 million. Some of these firms have an option to produce one million additional berets prior to the October 1 phase-in deadline. Under normal circumstances, U.S. firms could supply the Army with these berets.

"In its decision to purchase berets from foreign suppliers, the Defense Logistics Agency waived the Berry Amendment, the federal law which requires the Pentagon to buy clothing made in U.S. factories of 100 percent American components, and bypassed normal procurement procedures in order to meet an unusually short deadline. The Berry Amendment was passed to protect the American industrial base the military relies upon in times of peace and war. It is true that waiving the amendment is permissible in order to meet high volume requests or tight time constraints. However, we have been informed that the American apparel industry could produce the new one-piece berets the Army requested -- rather than the two-piece sewn items that American firms currently manufacture -- if these firms had been given sufficient lead time to fill the order. Instead, the seemingly arbitrary deadline for the new berets will cause U.S. firms to lose millions of dollars and send this important business to foreign companies.

"We are also disturbed by press accounts that awarding this contract to foreign firms will be more expensive for American taxpayers. It has been reported that the cost of a beret made overseas is \$9, compared to \$4.75 that would be charged by U.S. companies. Military uniforms are a powerful symbol for U.S. soldiers, representing who they are and what they stand for. That is one reason why they are manufactured in our own country, except in times of crisis. The Army's decision to purchase the black berets from companies who manufacture them overseas may undermine the very morale and unity the Army is attempting to instill in its forces with its decision to outfit its soldiers in matching headgear. This decision will also harm U.S. companies and American workers, and may in fact waste taxpayer dollars."

End of Letter to President Bush and End of Release