The President is offering America a false choice when he says we have to decide between resolve and retreat in Iraq. We must not just withdraw, but we cannot simply stay the same course that has brought us to this place in time. If we simply withdraw now, the current instability in Iraq would balloon and we will have produced another failed state, owned and operated by terrorists like the Taliban in Afghanistan. If we just keep doing what we have been doing, we will continue to spend American tax dollars and more importantly, sacrifice the lives of our brave soldiers. We must take positive action to try to alter the strategic equation that has fueled terrorism and placed a heavy strain on our Army, National Guard, and Reserves, constrained our options toward Iran and North Korea, and cost us nearly 2,000 American lives in Iraq. Diplomacy has to be part of this new campaign. Our military leaders make it clear, they cannot defeat the insurgency. The war on terrorism is politically and economically and diplomatically. Right now there are almost no troops from Muslim nations who are fighting at the side of the Iraqi government. There are almost no Arab diplomats in Iraq. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has pushed out to the Arab gulf states and others and convince them that a secure and stable Iraq is in their interest as well as ours and that they must assume some of the risk and burden of this enterprise. That is not the way we have approached this war to date. But it is an effort that we must undertake, along with the Iraqis themselves.

The President needs to let the Iraqi people know that we will not remain indefinitely in Iraq, and communicate that message to the rest of the world as well. The Iraqi government and its security forces need to prepare for assuming all the functions expected of them by a free and sovereign Iraqi people who want and for whom American troops can come home. The administration’s admission, however, that only one battalion of the Iraqi army is capable of operating on its own does not really bring us any closer to meeting this goal. It is the responsibility of the administration to make it clear why we have not done better in training and preparing Iraqi soldiers to replace American soldiers, and it is the responsibility of this administration to train and develop, and in fact, our soldiers can come home. It is time for the people and leaders of Iraq to take control of their own country and their own destiny.

We are not abandoning Iraq. Indeed, we and Iraqis themselves must reach out to other partners, especially the predominantly Muslim countries, to collaborate in the consolidation of Iraqi security and democracy. We are not setting a date for departure. We are simply letting the Iraqis know, in the clearest possible terms, that we intend to bring our forces home. Reminding all concerned that we will not stay re-futes the assertion that we intend to establish permanent military bases in Iraq, an allegation that, unfortunately, fuels the insurgency.

We should do nothing that would mislead the Iraqis into thinking they have unlimited time to take control of their own destiny. An enduring American occupation is neither in Iraq’s interest nor in ours. If the Iraqis made progress on Saturday, moving toward a constitution, moving toward a government, moving toward a nation, we must tell them that there is a sense of responsibility of nationhood that goes beyond the obvious establishment of government. The most important responsibility is to secure your own borders, to protect your own people, to provide for the common defense of your own nation. Now that is a responsibility that must be shouldered by the Iraqis. If we are uncertain in speaking to this new Iraqi government about our plans and our timetable in Iraq, then I think we will count on American soldiers to be there risking their lives indefinitely. That is unacceptable.

This administration has to make it clear that Iraqi army soldiers are prepared to shoulder that burden and to provide for the relief to American soldiers in Iraq. That they can return home to a hero’s welcome and to their families who wait anxiously for that day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Vitter). The Senator from Delaware.

HURRICANE KATRINA RESPONSE

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I rise to discuss how we could be doing better in our response to Hurricane Katrina. I just spoke with one of Louisiana’s Senators coming over to the Chamber to speak, and the word that I heard with respect to the situation on the ground, particularly the response of FEMA to the ongoing crisis, was discouraging. We can do better. We have to be able to do better for the people there and for those who are footing the bill, the taxpayers.

Hurricane Katrina was truly an unprecedented event. It was in all likelihood the worst natural disaster in our Nation’s history. It was certainly the worst natural disaster I have witnessed in my lifetime. I can understand then that there might be some mistakes made, that there might not be easy solutions to some of the problems faced by millions of Americans directly affected by this tragedy. I believe there are too many key areas where we have experienced clear failures that just cannot be shrugged off. We have all heard about the slow initial response to the storm. We have also heard about the ongoing response to the inevitable failures that probably weren’t necessary. But I am going to speak for a few minutes today about a truly distressing failure that is leading to hardship among Katrina evacuees and is also wasting a lot of Federal taxpayer dollars that could have been better used.

As my colleagues are aware, hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents have seen their homes severely damaged. The President is offering America a false choice when he says we have to decide between resolve and retreat in Iraq. We must not just withdraw, but we cannot simply stay the same course that has brought us to this place in time. If we simply withdraw now, the current instability in Iraq would balloon and we will have produced another failed state, owned and operated by terrorists like the Taliban in Afghanistan. If we just keep doing what we have been doing, we will continue to spend American tax dollars and more importantly, sacrifice the lives of our brave soldiers. We must take positive action to try to alter the strategic equation that has fueled terrorism and placed a heavy strain on our Army, National Guard, and Reserves, constrained our options toward Iran and North Korea, and cost us nearly 2,000 American lives in Iraq. Diplomacy has to be part of this new campaign. Our military leaders make it clear, they cannot defeat the insurgency. The war on terrorism is politically and economically and diplomatically. Right now there are almost no troops from Muslim nations who are fighting at the side of the Iraqi government. There are almost no Arab diplomats in Iraq. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has pushed out to the Arab gulf states and others and convince them that a secure and stable Iraq is in their interest as well as ours and that they must assume some of the risk and burden of this enterprise. That is not the way we have approached this war to date. But it is an effort that we must undertake, along with the Iraqis themselves.

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As my colleagues are aware, hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents have seen their homes severely
damaged. Too many have seen them completely destroyed. Many of these people are still living far away from home, with little or no hope of returning to their communities any time soon, if ever. FEMA has moved swiftly in recent weeks to address evacuees out of temporary mass shelters that we saw in places such as the Astrodome in Houston. The problem is that many evacuees are still living in hotels today, waiting for FEMA to move them into longer-term temporary housing. There have been a number of media reports recently that FEMA is currently spending millions of dollars every day to house hundreds of thousands of these evacuees in hotels around our country. The total cost of this program, according to the Washington Post this morning, will likely approach $200 million by the end of this month alone. Worse yet, FEMA has apparently not even been keeping track of the number of evacuees in hotels. I ask unanimous consent that several articles on this subject be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material listed below would be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

(By Jacqueline L. Salmon and Spencer S. Hsu)

PROGRAM EVACUATES WERE MISCOUNTED, RED CROSS SAYS

The American Red Cross said yesterday that it has vastly overstated the number and potential cost—of Hurricane Katrina evacuees in hotel rooms because of errors in how it interpreted its data. Embarrassed officials from the charity acknowledged that instead of housing 600,000 displaced people, the hotel program—paid for by the federal government—is housing 200,000 storm evacuees. Red Cross officials attributed the error to the misreading of daily reports from a consultant handling the hotel placements: Staff members mistook a cumulative tally of people who had lived in hotels to date for the daily hotel population. ‘‘Clearly, we were wrong from the track,’’ said Armond Mascelli, Red Cross vice president for domestic response operations.

Compounding the error, the Federal Emergency Management Agency kept no independent count of the program’s beneficiaries or its costs, said FEMA spokeswoman Mary Margaret Walker. She said FEMA apparently was relying on the erroneous numbers as it searched frantically for other housing options for evacuees.

The revision in the number of people in hotels could cut in half the $2,358 for three months so that families in shelters or hotels could rent apartments. Instead of setting up as many as 30,000 trailers and mobile homes every two weeks, as of Tuesday, just 7,908 were occupied. Even counting berths on the four ships that FEMA has leased and rooms on military bases and elsewhere, the agency has provided only 10,940 occupied housing units for victims in the three Gulf states. FEMA, reacting to criticism that it might create super-concentrated slums, has scaled back plans to build so-called FEMA villages with up to 25,000 trailers in a less ambitious plan—complexes with 200 or so units—has been slow to unfold. FEMA officials cite the reluctance by some rural parishes or landowners to welcome evacuees.”

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Representative Barney Frank, Democrat of Massachusetts, who sits on a House panel that helps oversee the housing effort, complained that it was unreasonable for the federal government to expect that a family led by jobless parents, with no car, little savings and little familiarity with a new city could independently find an apartment. "This policy is incoherent and socially seriously flawed," he said in an interview.

Real estate officials say that although there are few available apartments in Louisiana, there are many vacancies in apartment buildings across the South, including perhaps 300,000 in Texas alone. "Where are they going to go?"" asked Tim Busbey, a director of the National Multi Housing Council, a group of building owners and managers, said of FEMA. "All of this housing is available now."

Some housing experts say the Bush administration should follow the approach taken after the 1984 Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles, when displaced residents were given prepaid housing vouchers instead of having to negotiate and pay a lease on their own. "We had a hand over hand because we did not deploy the right policy tools," said Bruce Katz, a vice president at the Brookings Institution, a liberal research group in Washington. "We could have reached thousands, if not tens of thousands of families, in stable permanent housing right now. And we would not have to turn to these costly measures, loans and cruise ships," he said.

Ms. Andrews, the FEMA spokeswoman, defended the housing policy. "The program is designed to give those who it affects the most the control over their own lives," she said.

Some cities, including Houston and San Antonio, have taken an active role in helping families by creating their own voucher program, identifying vacant units, paying for six-month leases and then turning over the unit to the evacuees. FEMA has promised to reimburse the cities for the housing costs.

"You can't just give people a check and say, 'Good luck, we will see you,' " said San Antonio's assistant city manager, Christopher J. Brady. "It would not be a sufficient solution.

FEMA officials said other cities can set up similar programs. But Mayor Franklin of Atlanta and Mayor Laura Miller of Dallas have said they cannot do so without being paid in advance by the government.

Expressing frustration that she could not offer more help to the 39,000 displaced people who have come to Georgia, Mayor Franklin said FEMA's expectations that her city could advance housing money were unrealistic. "Our government is not large enough to do that," she said. "We can't absorb the costs."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's evolving efforts to shelter Hurricane Katrina victims continue to waste huge amounts of taxpayer dollars and could soon leave many evacuees short of money and facing eviction, according to renter advocates and housing industry officials.

The concern stems from FEMA's extension of an $8.3 million-a-day program to house 549,000 people in hotel rooms beyond an Oct. 15 deadline and its handling of a new rental assistance program, which offers some families a lump sum of $2,358 for three months' rent. The disaster agency has previously drawn criticism for its troubled $1 billion-plus effort to house hurricane evacuees in 125,000 trailers.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition, an advocate that said that expiring rent programs is based on the $786-per-month national median rent for a two-bedroom apartment and is much lower than city-by-city rates used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development — many evacuees taken to more costly cities are already short on cash to pay rent. Agency officials said they must pay a deposit and first month's rent; it cited Washington as an example, where the average rent is about $1,100 and where about 5,000 people have moved in.

"You can't just give people a check and say, 'Good luck, we will see you,' " said San Antonio's assistant city manager, Christopher J. Brady. "I would like to stay here as long as I can," he said, "I don't have anywhere else in the world to go."

The warnings come as a wide range of players in the nation's housing and lodging industries express mounting exasperation with FEMA's shifting efforts to cope with the evacuee crisis. Although the administration has proposed cruise ships, trailers, President Bush's "massacrevacuation," initiatives, hotels and now apartment grants, they say FEMA is ignoring advice from experts inside and outside the government.

"The normal FEMA programs just aren't working. They may be good for 1,500, 2,000 people, but when you're talking a half a million, they do not work," said Douglas C. Culkin, executive director of the National Apartment Association.

Culkin said 1 million rental units are vacant in the southeastern United States at half the rate of FEMA's $1.77 billion hotel program. He said the current spending rate of $250 million a month "a horrendous waste of taxpayer money." Linda Couch, deputy director of the low-income housing coalition, agreed that taxpayer money could be saved by using vacant apartment units. "If the federal government made a choice to subsidize them at the rents they are available at, it looks like it still is still spending far less than having them live in a hotel," she said.

FEMA spokesman Nicol Andrews said that the agency extended the program can be extended to 18 months. If rents keep receipts and show that their housing costs exceed $766 a month, FEMA will allow them to pay the difference. Congress has set a $26,200 limit per family for FEMA aid of all kinds, including home repairs, for Katrina victims.

Some housing advocates said that the trailer process is not moving as fast as the agency would like. She declined to comment on criticism from the housing sector but noted that FEMA is establishing huge new programs and that shelter populations have dropped 75 percent in two weeks.

The scale of Katrina's exodus is immense and growing. On Thursday, FEMA's acting director, R. David Paulison, increased the agency's estimate of the number of families expected to need housing for up to several months, from 300,000 to between 400,000 and 600,000.

FEMA said Friday that the number of people staying in temporary shelters, which Bush has pledged to clear by mid-October, has fallen to 31,500 from a peak of more than 300,000. Paulison said the number of families receiving assistance has declined to 412,000 displaced households and has registered 2 million storm victims.

"The recovery process for Hurricane Katrina will not be simple or easy," Paulison said. "Many . . . rightfully are concerned about the cost, as we all are."

Critics in Congress and elsewhere have focused on large trailer contracts and the difficulty FEMA has encountered in acquiring and placing trailers. So far, FEMA has provided aid by emergency workers and evacuees across the Gulf Coast. Some also have criticized spending $256 million to house 7,000 people on three Carnival Cruise Lines ships.

Last week, three major national apartment owner associations criticized FEMA for ignoring their offers of help and expressed concern over whether the agency extended the hotel program. The average room rate of $5 per day is more than twice the cost of rental vouchers in HUD's low-income Section 8 housing program and the rental aid provided by FEMA and HUD to Katrina victims. It also exceeds the median monthly income in some of the nation's most expensive cities.

The groups cited 50,000 vacant apartments in Dallas-Fort Worth alone and 1 million in the southeastern United States at rents that range from $700 to $1,200 a month— vacancy totals confirmed by others outside the industry.

"Our message is simple. There are currently tens of thousands of available rental units that could offer evacuees the opportunity to more quickly recover from their devastating losses," the National Multi Housing Council, the National Apartment Association and the National Leased Housing Association, wrote to Secretary Alphonso Jackson and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "To extend the hotel program indefinitely prolongs homelessness and makes the federal government

Funding officials point to the city of Dallas's Project Exodus as an example of better planning. It has placed about 1,000 people in apartments in Dallas at half the rate of FEMA's $1.767-month hotel program. He called the current spending rate of $250 million a month "a horrendous waste of taxpayer money."

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FEMA FAID CALLED TOO MUCH, TOO LITTLE
Houston also has agreed to pay up to 12 months of housing assistance for Katrina victims, hoping for FEMA reimbursement, Tate said.

About 37,000 evacuees are in Dallas area hotel rooms, said Miller, and more than 150,000 evacuees are in rooms across Texas. "We said, We can't wait for FEMA," said Dallas Mayor Miller. "What I am reading about is about all these other cities who are waiting for trailer homes to show up so they can re-create these trailer villages. That would be the worst thing you can do."

Mr. CARPER. While it is certainly reasonable to house evacuees in hotels on a short-term basis, this situation is simply unacceptable nearly 2 months after Katrina struck the coast. I am told that real estate and housing experts have pointed out that perhaps hundreds of thousands of suitable and likely much more affordable apartments could be had throughout the gulf coast region. I am certain that they could probably be had for significantly less than the cost of a hotel room. In addition, the Washington Post recently reported that a joint FEMA–HUD rental assistance program is likely wasting millions of dollars. In at least some cases, the program is not doing much to help some parts of the country find suitable housing.

Each evacuee participating in the voucher program, according to the Post, initially receives a subsidy amount based on the national median rent for 3 months. In some parts of the country, such as Houston, the national median rent probably isn't enough to find suitable housing. In other communities, it might be more than enough. This means that Katrina evacuees in some parts of the country may be getting more assistance than they need, and those in higher cost areas might not be getting what they need to provide for their families.

It has been suggested that the solution to the housing crisis in the gulf might be to house evacuees in trailers or some other form of manufactured housing. But I have heard reports that FEMA is buying many of its trailers straight off the lot at retail prices. I have also heard that there are thousands of trailers just sitting around unoccupied in vacant lots. We have all heard stories about how miserable some of the trailer camps are to live in that FEMA has set up in places like Florida.

We can do better than this. FEMA owes it to Katrina victims and to the American taxpayers to find a more comfortable, less expensive way to house our fellow Americans who are going through such a difficult time right now. That is why I am sending a letter today to Acting FEMA Director David Paulison to ask him to tell us exactly what FEMA's plan is to get Katrina evacuees out of hotels and into more stable living environments so that they can begin the process of bringing their lives as close to normal as possible.

The problems and the waste we are seeing in FEMA's Katrina housing pro-

gram remind me yet again that we need to do some work to ensure that the money we are spending to help Katrina victims is spent wisely and effectively. To date we have approved in the Congress $62 billion for Katrina. More money will probably be needed, but given the number of stories we see almost on a daily basis now about financial mismanagement, about confusion at FEMA, and the Department of Homeland Security, we should not be writing a blank check.

A recovery effort this large needs additional oversight to make sure the money we are spending is going to the people who need it most, to make sure we eliminate wasteful spending and get the most bang for our buck, and to make sure we reduce the potential for fraud.

It is my understanding that we are not sure what legislation is coming to the floor next week. I have a suggestion. The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, of which I am a member, approved two bills a couple of weeks ago that I believe are desperately needed to make sure Katrina recovery funds are spent properly and go to the people who are most in need.

One of the bills we passed would appoint a chief financial officer to oversee the day-to-day use of Federal funds in the cleanup and reconstruction efforts underway in the gulf. I cosponsored this legislation with Senator Coburn of Oklahoma and Senator Obama of Illinois. It enjoys bipartisan support, including the cosponsorship, I believe, of both the Republican leader and Democratic leader of the Senate.

The chief financial officer would oversee the various Federal agencies involved in the recovery efforts and hold them financially accountable. The CFO would be Congress's personal watchdog, issuing periodic financial reports on whether the money is going to the people who need it the most and whether it is being used to hire local workers who need jobs.

The second bill would expand the authority of the inspector general assigned to Iraq reconstruction to oversee the Katrina recovery efforts. The expanded office would audit recovery operations and investigate allegations of waste, fraud, and inefficiency.

Together, these two bills would better protect American taxpayers and bring some much-needed accountability to the recovery efforts.

We shouldn't settle for the stories we see in the papers every day about the lack of decent housing for Katrina victims or the lack of competition for Federal contracts. We shouldn't read stories about waste and resign ourselves to the fact that waste is just something that happens in the Federal Government. We can do better, and we must. We owe it to the American taxpayers to look out for it to Katrina's victims to do better.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be discharged.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask permission to speak in morning business until Senator Brownack arrives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAQ

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I think it is appropriate this morning that those of us in elected office, and every American, show some appreciation for what is going on in Iraq this morning.

I turned on the television and saw a new face of Iraq, I saw a judge schooled in the law, loyal to the law, presiding over a trial of Saddam Hussein, a person who was schooled in thuggery, loyal to himself and his agenda, one of the most brutal murderers the Middle East has known. And I saw an attorney bringing out the case against Saddam Hussein.

How did that all happen? It happened through sheer will. First, violence had to replace diplomacy because diplomacy was failing. The effort to contain Saddam Hussein's regime, to rein it in, to clearly understand what his purposes were about weapons of mass destruction, to get him to stay out of the upheaval of the Middle East, to be a productive member of the Middle East society, the world community, in my opinion, failed miserably and we had to resort to force and violence to oust a man who had perpetrated many crimes against his own people and his neighbors.

How did it happen, at the end of the day? It happened through the bravery, commitment, and sacrifice of the American military, their coalition partners, and the Iraqi people themselves.

We have lost around 2,000 troops since the war began. To those families who have lost loved ones, there is nothing I can say other than I am sorry and, in my opinion, for what it is worth, your loved ones have advanced our cause of freedom by participating in a military operation to bring Saddam Hussein off the throne and into the dock as a defendant.

To those coalition members who have stood with us and who have sacrificed, thank you. Because of your sacrifice, the cause of freedom has been advanced.

We do not appreciate enough, in my opinion, the sacrifice of the Iraqi people. I believe it is the judge or one member of the court whose brother was assassinated. To sit in judgment of Saddam Hussein is going to be a prosecutor, a policeman, or member of the army. They wear a target on