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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, You have given humankind freedom of will to choose to love and to serve You. Today we are painfully aware of the tragic misuse of this freedom in Kosovo and yesterday in Littleton, Colorado, at Columbine High School. It is with grief that we have followed the merciless bloodshed of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. On television and in our daily newspapers, we have looked into the haunted, anguished faces of the refugees driven from their homes.

And now, this morning, we are shocked by the accounts of the shooting of fellow students by disaffected young men filled with hate and anger. We pray for the parents, families, and friends of the many teenagers who were killed or wounded.

O God, when there is no place else to turn, we return to You. You have not given up on humankind in spite of all the dreadful things we do to ourselves and to one another. We confess our own little sins of prejudice and rejection that we see written large in the crises of our times. O Lord of Hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget to love You and glorify You by respecting the wonder of each person's life. Through our Lord and Savior. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able Senator from Washington State is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, under the order of last night, the Senate will be

in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m. Following morning business, the Senate will begin debate on the conference report to accompany the education flexibility bill. By previous order, there are 3 hours of debate on the conference report, and a vote can be expected at the conclusion or yielding back of that time.

On Tuesday, a cloture motion was filed on the lockbox amendment to S. 557. Therefore, Senators should expect that cloture vote on Thursday. As a reminder, pursuant to rule XXII, second-degree amendments must be filed 1 hour prior to a vote on cloture.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

Mr. President, I seek recognition in my own right. I believe the remarks I am about to make are more proper from my own desk than from the majority leader's.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). If the Senator will permit, the Chair will read these orders and then the time will be granted.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 12:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Under the previous order, the Senator from Washington, Mr. GORTON, is recognized to speak for up to 15 minutes.

WAR IN THE BALKANS

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, the Congress is about to be asked to appropriate \$10 billion, and perhaps more, in

emergency funds to finance a war in the Balkans and to help the refugees that war has created. We will be asked to do so after a brief debate and with no opportunity to impose conditions or to add reservations. That is the wrong way to deal with so grave an issue.

On March 23, the Senate authorized air attacks on Yugoslavia in the hope that they would motivate the Government of Yugoslavia to grant autonomy to the Kosovars, a status far less than the independence they seek, enforced by the presence of American and other NATO troops for an undefined period of time, and thus to prevent a refugee crisis. We have been spectacularly unsuccessful at attaining either goal.

I voted against the March resolution. I did so because I believe that the United States should engage in armed conflict only when its vital interests are at stake, and that the then Serb repression of the Kosovar Albanians did not involve any of our vital national interests.

My vote was also motivated by the belief that the limited bombing proposed would be unlikely to help us reach the dubious goal of occupying Kosovo. When we do engage our Armed Forces in conflict, we should do so decisively and with overwhelming force aimed at the cause of the conflict—in this case, the Milosevic government in Belgrade.

This conflict, to the contrary, was begun in too limited a fashion to be likely to bring the Serbs to heel, with no contingency plans should the early bombing not work, and with no anticipation of the brutal Serb reaction in driving hundreds of thousands of Kosovars out of home and country.

It is that failure that brings us to our present state. The President will not acknowledge our failure to reach his goals, will not speak seriously to the American people about both ends and means, and will not ask Congress to authorize him to act decisively and to support him in doing so. Instead, we

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are engaged in a conflict in which the primary goal seems to be to avoid American casualties, the secondary goal to avoid Serbian casualties. So the only real casualties are among the Kosovar Albanians, the people the conflict was designed to protect.

The President will not, and should not, send our troops into Kosovo and won't arm the Kosovo rebels so they can defend themselves. We bomb buildings that we are certain are empty but not television towers or airports. We bomb oil storage depots but allow oil tankers to unload replacement oil within sight of our fleet.

At this point, of course, a conflict over an issue that was not vital to our national security in the beginning has now escalated to one that is, both with respect to the refugees and to the survival of NATO itself, all due to the frivolous and half-hearted nature of our military operations. In the abstract, this fact lays weight to the arguments of Senators LUGAR and MCCAIN, among others, to lift the artificial and self-defeating renunciation of ground operations.

But their arguments flounder disastrously with the first whiff of reality. This is a war run by committee. A dozen politicians from almost as many countries must sign off on targets even with respect to the air war. The United States has not even sought NATO consent to arm the Kosovars and to blockade Yugoslavia.

Does any Senator believe for a moment that this administration will wage or is capable of waging a real war with victory as its goal? No.

We have only four realistic alternatives, all unpalatable. First, there is the remote hope that Milosevic will surrender and agree to our demands. Under those circumstances, we would get to occupy Kosovo for perhaps 25 years. Second, we may quit and go home, leaving chaos in our wake. Third, the most likely outcome now is a settlement brokered by the Russians in which the 90 percent of Albanian Kosovars get the poorest half of a devastated province and the 10 percent Serb Kosovars get the best half. We will then be asked to rebuild Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, and probably Serbia as well. President Clinton will proclaim this a victory.

The fourth and last alternative is a gradual escalation of the air war, followed by gradual escalation on the ground, without any prospect of real victory but at a very real cost in American lives and the expenditure of billions of American dollars.

Each of these alternatives, Mr. President, is a terrible disservice to the brave American men and women who are loyally fighting this war and who deserve better from our leaders. Each is a tragedy for the hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians rooted out of destroyed homes, turned into impoverished refugees or killed outright.

It is those prospects that the Senate should be debating, using such time as

is proportionate to the seriousness of the issues.

But we are now faced with the prospect of a \$12 billion add-on to a \$2 billion supplemental appropriations bill, with little opportunity for debate and no opportunity to amend or condition that appropriation. What should have been an occasion for a serious debate will become instead a venture in avoiding the responsibility to ask and to answer hard questions.

That is a game the Senate should not play. At the very least, we should allow those who propose intervention on the ground an opportunity to make their case, and those of us who wish to arm the rebels a chance to make ours.

An appropriation covering the cost of this conflict until October without seriously debated conditions is a blank check to the President to conduct the conflict as he pleases. It is all the authorization for war on the ground he is ever likely to seek. It is a total abdication of our responsibilities. I cannot support such an action. I will do all I can to defeat it.

Mr. WYDEN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Thank you, Mr. President.

TRAGIC SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, once again the Senate is grieving for one of our communities that has suffered a tragic school shooting. We are all profoundly saddened today by the news out of the State of Colorado.

For those of us from my home State of Oregon, this feeling is, unfortunately, too familiar. It was just about a year ago that this same form of evil visited Thurston High School in Oregon. And I want to say, first and foremost, to the people of Colorado that Oregon's heart goes out to all of you today. The people of Colorado are in our prayers.

If our experience can be any measure of comfort, I would offer the observation that in Colorado, just as it was in Oregon, the parents and students will find that their neighbors can be an incredible resource of support. There is more strength in our communities than we realize. And while nothing—nothing—can ever ease this sort of pain, that strength does possess a tremendous healing power.

Mr. President, why are we seeing these tragedies in our country? We feel so good about the very strong economy. We play a preeminent leadership role in the world. There are so many good things in our Nation. But we send our children off to school in the morning and so often we have to worry that they might be gunned down by a classmate. What has produced this horrible evil?

I do not come to the floor of the Senate today to say I have the answers, but I know that we are not doing our job in this body if we do not try to find

them. And it seems to me those of us from the States that have seen this horrible scourge—the Senators from Colorado and Arkansas and Kentucky and my own of Oregon—need to sit down together—and soon—and begin a meaningful conversation about the practical and concrete steps that can be taken to prevent these tragedies. We ought to talk with everyone, we ought to talk with Sarah Brady, who has one point of view, talk with the National Rifle Association, who has another point of view. We need to have a concrete dialogue with all who have been part of this national discussion to find a way to stop these tragedies.

In the wake of what happened in Springfield, OR, Senator GORDON SMITH and I worked, on a bipartisan basis, to make sure that if a kid brought a gun to school, action would be taken to treat that as a five-alarm warning. Looking at yesterday's tragedy, it seems to me that our bipartisan bill would not have been enough, because these students had never been caught with guns in school before. But the facts appear to be that the students there knew that this group was involved with weapons and that they had been engaged in potentially dangerous activities. We need to find ways to translate this knowledge into concrete approaches so the authorities can take steps to protect our youngsters in our schools.

Mr. President, so many Members of this body are parents. Many of our colleagues have been blessed with grandchildren. It chills all of us to the bone to think that this can happen in our communities, and that it has happened too often.

The people have elected us to lead. This is a problem which cannot be avoided. I am going to do everything I can, in a bipartisan fashion, with colleagues from other States that have seen these tragedies, to find those practical steps so parents across this country can have the certainty that when they send their youngsters to school they will come home safely at the end of the day.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I thank the Chair and I also thank my good friend from Vermont, the chairman of the committee that I serve on with him. I wanted to just take a few minutes to focus the attention of the Senate on this terrible tragedy that occurred yesterday in our schools. We all now know two students of Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, stormed into their school and began shooting at students and teachers, yesterday. The last that I heard, police believed that 16 people have been killed. Many of them were either just beginning their lunch or were studying in the library at the time they were assaulted. The details behind the violence are overwhelming, and the motivations leading to it are incomprehensible to all of us. But we are left wondering how this could happen in a suburban community like Littleton, CO.