

doesn't have a lot to do with party identification, period.

As I said yesterday—and I will get to the specifics about Minnesota—I know I have never voted against disaster assistance moneys for any part of the country because I think it is an example of there but for the grace of God go I. We are grateful that I can help other parts of the country, and we are grateful it wasn't our homes or farms or that it didn't happen in our State. We are grateful that it didn't happen in our communities. But sometimes it does happen in our State and in our communities, in which case we come to the floor and ask colleagues for support.

Really, on the whole question of offsets, we haven't done offsets for disaster relief before. This is just something that happens and we know when it happens that we provide the help. So in the case of Minnesota, we are talking about 17 counties in northwest Minnesota. We are talking about rich farmland and about having been really massively damaged and devastated by the flooding. FEMA does good work. I love the work they do. They have been to Minnesota many times. They are an amazing group of men and women. It is an interesting job they have. They come in crisis situations and help with temporary housing, and the Small Business Administration tries to help with additional funding; and if there is damage of infrastructure, public infrastructure, they have helped us rebuild schools in our State.

As my colleague from Montana and all Senators who are from farm country know, they do not provide assistance to the farmers. We need help for these farmers—the wheat growers, corn growers, soybean growers, you name it. Everything that is in the farm bill will be irrelevant. We are lucky if it covers 70 percent of the cost. We would be very lucky. The farmers cannot afford a 30-percent loss.

I call on our colleagues for their support. The past is the past, and the present is the present. I am interested in the present. We had in the Senate bill farm money for disaster relief assistance. I wish it had been kept in conference. It was not. That is beside the point. It is in the past. We tried to put it on the emergency supplemental bill, and there was opposition.

My hope today is that we will come together, Democrats and Republicans, and we will do it because we know this is what we always do. When people are faced with these kinds of crises—this does not have anything to do with low prices; it does not have anything to do with countercyclical payments or dairy payments; it does not have anything to do with the Conservation Reserve Program.

This has to do with weather-related disasters that have literally devastated so many people in farm country in America today and/or in other parts of our country today. I think of the fires again.

I come to the Chamber to urge my colleagues, to appeal to my colleagues to please support this amendment. Please support it. This amendment will provide much needed help to many wonderful, hard-working people in northwestern Minnesota and, for that matter, around the country.

The vote we are going to have, which will probably be sometime before noon, will be a critically important vote. We will need 60 votes. I hope we get the 60 votes. I say to the Chair, having been to northwest Minnesota several times, these have been some of the toughest meetings I have ever attended. The farmers are at their wits end. It is not like they are asking for help. The Presiding Officer knows some of the people about whom I am speaking. They are not comfortable asking for help. They know they have to have help or there is no tomorrow; they will have no future at all.

If they can get the good news today that the Senate said, We are going to provide you with the help, we are going to provide the disaster relief money, it will make all the difference in the world. If we get over 60 votes, I really believe we will have a good chance of keeping it in conference. I think the White House will support us, and we can do this together.

As a Senator from Minnesota, having a pretty clear picture about when we talk about \$300 million worth or \$350 million worth of damage and number of acres, I translate that all into personal terms. I think of all the husbands, wives, children, and families with whom I have met. The farmers are not here, but they are counting on us to represent them well.

I say to all Senators, please represent well the people in the country who have been hit with these natural disasters, and please vote for this amendment. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business for 5 or 6 minutes.

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

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair.

IRAQ

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, as we contemplate military action against Iraq, I wish to bring to the attention of my colleagues the rationalization, in the opinion of the junior Senator from Alaska, of the circumstances surrounding the risk to allow Saddam Hussein to continue to develop weapons of mass destruction.

It is no secret that over an extended period of time, Saddam Hussein and Iraq have been developing this capability. It not only includes chemical weapons and biological weapons, but a delivery system. Clearly, we have seen as a consequence of the Persian Gulf war the capability of a delivery system reaching Israel. In addition to that, we have every reason to believe he is developing his nuclear capability.

The question to which we have to relate is, of course, the obligation as to how to thwart this exposure from the standpoint of the United States' role as not only the peacekeeper of the world but the recognition that if the United States does not do it, it probably will not be done.

I bring that reference up to simply highlight a comparison. Had we known in advance of 9/11 the contemplated exposure—not only to the United States, but the peace of the world, as we knew the world prior to that time and the recognition that a number of aircraft was going to be used as weapons and the consequences associated with the aircraft that went into the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon, and, of course, the exposure in Washington and other areas of the United States associated with the activities at that time—we would have taken some action, Mr. President. There is no question about it because we knew the ramifications of not taking such action.

What I am saying is we have a dilemma in the sense of a recognized concentration of weapons of mass destruction being controlled by an individual who is not only uncontrollable but one who has, over an extended period of time, initiated actions such as we have seen during the Persian Gulf war where he saw fit to invade Kuwait with the intention of going into Saudi Arabia with the objective of controlling the wealth of the oil provinces of that part of the world. That was his objective, make no mistake about it.

If he could have prevailed in Kuwait and gone into Saudi Arabia, he would have controlled a good portion of Middle East oil and, hence, the wealth and cashflows of the area.

The consequences of that, as we see Saddam Hussein again amassing this threat as a consequence of his development of weapons of mass destruction, brings us to the evaluation of what action we should take. Is it inevitable that sooner or later Saddam Hussein will use these weapons of mass destruction, and against whom?

We have had an opportunity to observe a pattern of Saddam Hussein in the time since the Persian Gulf war. If one can perhaps simplify it, we have initiated a no-fly zone over Iraq since about 1992. In initiating that no-fly zone, we have taken out some of his targets. He has attempted to shoot some of our aircraft down that are patrolling the area.

There is another inconsistency that stands out even more openly, and that

is the realization that during this time we have been buying oil from Saddam Hussein, hundreds of thousands of barrels a day. In September of 2001, we set a record by importing nearly 1.2 million barrels of oil per day from Saddam.

It is almost as if we would take his oil, put it in our airplanes, and go take out his targets. That is rather ironic. I think it is rather inconsistent, and it shows certainly an inconsistency in our foreign policy.

What does he do with the money he receives from the United States? Why, he takes care of his Republican Guard, the group that keeps him alive, and develops more weapons of mass destruction and perhaps aims them at our ally Israel. Maybe that is an oversimplification of foreign policy. Nevertheless, that is what has been going on over a period of time. So we have become, to some extent, perhaps a partner because we are providing Saddam Hussein indirectly, through the purchase of his oil, with a cashflow that allows him to develop his weapons of mass destruction.

Others might say that is inconsistent logic because someone else would buy his oil if the United States did not. I am not going to pursue that, other than to state a fact: We are buying hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil from Saddam Hussein. He is developing weapons of mass destruction. Where does he get the money? A portion of it comes from oil sales to the United States.

So as we contemplate our decision on initiating an action against Saddam Hussein, we have to look back to the circumstances surrounding 9/11 where, had we known that the threat was what it turned out to be, we would have initiated an action. We did not know. We did not initiate an action.

We can criticize our security. We can criticize the CIA and the other intelligence agencies for inadequate information. Nevertheless, the fact remains, we did not know. Had we known, we would have taken action.

In the case of Saddam Hussein, clearly we know he is developing weapons of mass destruction. So the point is, should we take action? If we do not, who will? What is the actual threat? We do not know, but it is clearly a choice. We are giving Saddam Hussein a choice of either surrender—in other words, open up your country to the U.N. inspectors—or be prepared for the ultimate alternative, and that is basically to be subjected to a conflict that could go on for some time.

I see my good friend, the senior Senator from West Virginia, is seeking recognition. I will conclude with one reference: That we need to consider again the obligation that the energy conferees have. The conference is in order. The issues are being discussed. There is an issue, and it is the issue of opening up ANWR that is within the authority of the conference to bring back to the Senate for action. As the President well knows, the House has

included ANWR in its bill and the issue is before the conference.

At a time when we are contemplating an action against Saddam Hussein, which certainly would result in an upheaval in the Mideast, it is imperative each Member recognize his or her obligation to address this with some finality. It simply makes sense to authorize the opening of this area so we can reduce our dependence on Mideast oil, particularly the sources we currently get our oil from, including Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

There is going to be an invitation by the conference to invite Members to ANWR, to Kaktovik, on September 13. Members should avail themselves of the opportunity to see for themselves that it could be opened up safely.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Alaska for his comments. There will come a time when the Senate should debate this question.

I compliment the distinguished Senator from Alaska on his concerns with respect to Saddam Hussein. I believe he said we have every reason to believe Saddam Hussein has developed a nuclear capability. I hope I am not misquoting the Senator.

In the days ahead, we will want to know what the evidence is. I do not intend to get into any long debate at this point about the matter because we have a bill before us with a pending amendment. We need to get on with that, but no Senator is seeking recognition at this point.

Perhaps Saddam Hussein has developed such a nuclear capability. When the able Senator says we have every reason to believe he has, that is not quite the point. Where is the evidence?

Of course, it is to be expected that some people in this country will assign unpatriotic reasons for the asking of questions by Senators. We have a right to ask questions, we have a duty to ask questions, because we are living in a very perilous time.

The war drums are beating all around us. I want to listen to what is said. I want to listen to what the President has to say. I want to listen to what he is going to say at the United Nations. I hope the United Nations will respond. I am not saying we in the Congress have to have authorization by the United Nations. Authorization is contained right here in this little book I hold in my hand, the Constitution of the United States. This Congress has the power to declare war.

I, for one, am not going to hang my vote on an authorization by the U.N. for us in this Congress to do thus and so. We should know what the United Nations has to say. I think the United Nations should take a position. If the straits are as dire as we hear, then the United Nations ought to be concerned. And the United Nations ought to give the world the benefit of its opinion. I

am glad the President is going to the United Nations.

I am breaking our own rules here. I ask unanimous consent, although the Pastore rule may not have run its course, I may speak on a different subject.

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

Mr. BYRD. The United Nations, I think, has a duty to let the world know where it stands and what its opinion is. If this country is going to eventually go into a difficult situation, as may confront us, if war is declared by this legislative branch, or if war is approved, authorized, by this legislative branch, then we in the United States should not have to go it alone.

But when we say we have every right to believe that Saddam Hussein has developed nuclear capability, well, we have every right in our minds to think perhaps he has, and we can easily convince ourselves, but is that enough? Where is the evidence?

I, for one, intend to ask questions as we go along. It is not unpatriotic to ask questions. I intend to ask questions. I have a right to ask questions. Where is the evidence? We might think about that as we go along.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2003—Continued

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I hope Senators will come to the floor if they have anything to say by way of debate on the pending amendment, if they have an amendment to the amendment. I hope Senators will come to the floor and exercise their right to offer amendments, or to speak. But we do not have the time to waste by just waiting and letting the clock run.

This afternoon, the Senate will be debating the homeland security legislation. Take a look at the situation we are in. October 1, a new fiscal year, is rapidly approaching. It is staring us in the face. Not one appropriations bill has been sent to the President for his signature. Where is the other House, where is the other body, on this matter? I don't seek to point the finger, but the facts are the facts.

The Appropriations Committee of the Senate, which I chair, and the distinguished former chairman, just preceding me, Senator STEVENS, he and I and others on the committee, Republicans and Democrats, have reported out 13 appropriations bills. We did that before the recess. We in the committee have done our work. Where is the House? Why doesn't the House report? I have to be careful about criticizing the other body. I don't criticize. I simply ask the question, Where is the House in this matter?

The House has acted on the House floor on, I believe, six bills; I believe I am correct. The Senate on the floor has acted on, in the past, three appropriations bills. One is now pending. But all the appropriations bills have been