

supplied and perhaps were under the direct control of the IIS;

Data collected by national technical collections systems with their own limitations.

The bad news is that we have to do this under conditions that ensure that our work will take time and impose serious physical dangers on those who are asked to carry it out. Why should we take the time and run the risk to ensure that our conclusions reflect the truth to the maximum extent that is possible given the conditions in post-conflict Iraq? For those of us that are carrying out this search, there are two reasons that drive us to want to complete this effort.

First, whatever we find will probably differ from pre-war intelligence. Empirical reality on the ground is, and has always been, different from intelligence judgments that must be made under serious constraints of time, distance and information. It is, however, only by understanding precisely what those differences are that the quality of future intelligence and investment decisions concerning future intelligence systems can be improved. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is such a continuing threat to global society that learning those lessons has a high imperative.

Second, we have found people, technical information and illicit procurement networks that if allowed to flow to other countries and regions could accelerate global proliferation. Even in the area of actual weapons there is no doubt that Iraq had at one time chemical and biological weapons. Even if there were only a remote possibility that these pre-1991 weapons still exist, we have an obligation to American troops who are now there and the Iraqi population to ensure that none of these remain to be used against them in the ongoing insurgency activity.

Mr. Chairman and Members I appreciate this opportunity to share with you the initial results of the first 3 months of the activities of the Iraqi Survey Group. I am certain that I speak for Major General Keith Dayton, who commands the Iraqi Survey Group, when I say how proud we are of the men and women from across the Government and from our Coalition partners, Australia and the United Kingdom, who have gone to Iraq and are carrying out this important mission.

Thank you.

Mr. BOND. We are engaged in a monumental fight against terrorism and tyranny on a global scale, one in which all freedom-loving people have a stake. Other free countries ought to realize this is a battle in which we all have a stake. The Middle East region has long been marked by instability and marred by war, the threat of war and torture, terrorism, and ruthless dictators. Saddam Hussein was at the heart of it. On September 11 we lost close to 3,000 citizens when foreign terrorists attacked innocent civilians. It is a miracle we did not lose more. But we are now fighting that battle against terrorism in Baghdad, not in Boston or Boise or Baldwin, MO.

As I said earlier, some argue that Saddam has not been linked to terrorism. Well, what David Kay has already described puts the lie to that. Also, tell that to the thousands of Israeli families who have lost innocent relatives at the hands of Hamas suicide bombers whose families received \$25,000 from the Iraqi dictator for each successful attack on innocent men, women, and children.

Today, on the good-news side, there are close to 100,000 Iraqis who are assuming control of essential civil responsibilities such as border police, civil defense, police facilities protection, and as soldiers. With each passing day, more and more Iraqis are taking the lead in security and in protecting Iraq. Over 85 percent of Iraq is relatively stable, with the exception of the troubled Sunni Triangle.

It is no surprise the Sunni Baathists are putting up the most resistance, for they have the most to lose. We have seen recently declassified reports of the Iraqi-sponsored torture, which are too disturbing even to watch. We found mass graves. We know Saddam conducted mass chemical attacks against his own people and launched chemical attacks against Iran.

I believe the President was correct when he said we must take on the war on terrorism, which would take years, not months. This is a global conflict against terrorism. The will of the American people is being tested. We cannot flinch. If we do not pursue terrorists where they live now, then we will continue to invite more attacks any time U.S. interests collide with the interests of terrorists.

EXHIBIT 1

The Oct. 26 front-page article "Search in Iraq Fails to Find Nuclear Threat" is wildly off the mark. Your reporter, Barton Gellman, bases much of his analysis on what he says was told to him by an Australian brigadier, Stephen D. Meekin. Gellman describes Meekin as someone "who commands the Joint Captured Materiel Exploitation Center, the largest of a half-dozen units that report to [David] Kay."

Meekin does not report, nor has he ever reported, to me in any individual capacity or as commander of the exploitation center. The work of the center did not form a part of my first interim report, which was delivered last month, nor do I direct what Meekin's organization does. The center's mission has never involved weapons of mass destruction, nor does it have any WMD expertise.

Gellman's description of information provided by Mahdi Obeidi, chief of Iraq's pre-1991 centrifuge program, relies on an unnamed "U.S. official" who, by the reporter's own admission, read only one reporting cable. How Gellman's source was able to describe reporting that covered four months is a mystery to me. Furthermore, the source mischaracterized our views on the reliability of Obeidi's information.

With regard to Obeidi's move to the United States, Gellman writes, "By summer's end, under unknown circumstances, Obeidi received permission to bring his family to an East Coast suburb in the United States." The reader is left with the impression that this move involved something manipulative or sinister. The "unknown circumstances" are called Public Law 110. This mechanism was created during the Cold War to give the director of central intelligence the authority to resettle those who help provide valuable intelligence information. Nothing unusual or mysterious here.

When the article moves to describe the actual work of the nuclear team, Gellman states that "frustrated members of the nuclear search team by late spring began calling themselves the 'book of the month club.'" But he fails to note that this was before the establishment of the Iraqi Survey Group. In

fact, the team's frustration with the pace of the work is what led President Bush to shift the responsibility for the WMD search to the director of central intelligence and to send me to Baghdad.

One would believe from what Gellman writes that I have sent home the two leaders of my nuclear team, William Domke and Jeffrey Bedell, and abandoned all attempts to determine the state of Iraq's nuclear activities. Wrong again, Domke's assignment had been twice extended well beyond what the Department of Energy had agreed to. He and Bedell were replaced with a much larger contingent of experts from DOE's National Labs.

Finally, with regard to the aluminum tubes, the tubes were certainly being imported and were being used for rockets. The question that continues to occupy us is whether similar tubes, with higher specifications, had other uses, specifically in nuclear centrifuges. Why anyone would think that we should want to confiscate the thousands of aluminum tubes of the lower specification is unclear. Our investigation is focused on whether a nuclear centrifuge program was either underway or in the planning stages, what design and components were being contemplated or used in such a program if it existed and the reason for the constant raising of the specifications of the tubes the Iraqis were importing clandestinely.

We have much work left to do before any conclusions can be reached on the state of possible Iraqi nuclear weapons program efforts. Your story gives the false impression that conclusions can already be drawn.

When Barton Gellman interviewed me last month I stressed on a number of occasions that my remarks related to Iraq's conventional weapons program. I am responsible for aspects of that program as the commander of the coalition Joint Captured Materiel Exploitation Center. I did not provide assessments or views on Iraq's nuclear program or the status of investigations being conducted by the Iraqi Survey Group.

On the issue of Iraq's use of aluminum tubes, I did confirm, in response to a question by Gellman, that aluminum tubes form the body of Iraqi 81mm battlefield rockets and that my teams had recovered some of these rockets for technical examination. Further, I stated that the empty tubes were innocuous in view of the large quantities of lethal Iraqi conventional weapons such as small arms, explosive ordnance and man-portable air defense systems in this country. I did not make any judgment on the suitability of the 81mm aluminum tubes as components in a nuclear program.

In discussing the disbanding of the Joint Captured Materiel Exploitation Center, I told your reporter that the center's work was largely complete, and I made clear that its role was in the realm of Iraq's conventional weapons and technologies.

Gellman attributed to me comments about the effect of U.N.-imposed sanctions. Again, I referred to Iraqi efforts to acquire conventional military equipment. I made no assessment about the effect of U.N. sanctions on Iraq's nuclear program.

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I will claim no more than 5 minutes of the time of the Senator from Texas.

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

HEALTHY FORESTS CONFERENCE

Mr. CRAIG. I come to the floor this morning a bit frustrated and maybe with a good reason to be angry at some of our colleagues for what now appears

to be a general intended deceit of the American people. I hope that is not the case and I certainly will take back those words if it is not. But actions are occurring behind the scenes as I speak that suggest I am not inaccurate.

What am I talking about? This past week the Senate was consumed in debating a bill about healthy forests and trying to develop some degree of active management on our public forest lands to reduce the overall fuel load that was and has been feeding the fires on our forested lands. Of course, last week, while we were debating here on the floor, America's attention was riveted in California where people were dying, homes were burning, and tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of acres were being consumed. Probably that was the worst wildfire this country has seen in several decades.

What happened last Thursday after a very full and robust debate on a bipartisan bill that had been crafted in the Agriculture Committee and then re-crafted between the Senator from California, a Democrat, the Senator from Oregon, a Democrat, myself, a Republican, and a variety of others to build a bipartisan alternative approach to this problem? We debated that bill and we passed it by a vote of 80 to 14. That would demonstrate to the American people that those who opposed us in the past somehow had gotten the message. Somehow there was an awakening here in the Senate that there was truly a need to resolve the issue of forest health.

The poster I have just put up was used last week. It says: "California Burns, Democrat Filibuster Continues."

That filibuster was broken. There was a rousing debate and an 80-to-14 vote. The Healthy Forests initiative passed, an initiative I had worked on for a good number of years as chairman of the Forestry Subcommittee. The President of the United States, standing in ashes in the forests of California or Oregon the summer before last, declared this country had to get busy at being better stewards of their public lands or we were going to continue to see catastrophic wildfires.

All of that finally came together last week. Now, on the morning news, we see a caravan of mourning firefighters as they lay to rest one of the firefighters who was killed in those cataclysmic fires of last week in southern California. While there are those laying to rest over 20 people killed in those fires, and while the Senate last Thursday, on an 80-to-14 vote, passed out a Healthy Forests initiative, now, quietly, behind the scene, the Democrat leaders are saying: No more. We will not allow the bill to move any further. We will not allow the bill that passed by a bipartisan vote to go to conference with the House to work out our differences, to actually make it law.

Do you understand what I am saying? I am saying the debate last week and

the cataclysmic fires in California somehow have not changed anybody's mind; they have not changed or are not going to allow public policy to change; that behind the scenes there is now a silent, invisible filibuster on the part of Democratic leadership that will not allow this bipartisan bill to go to conference because, if it doesn't go to conference and the House and the Senate can't work out their differences, it will not become law. If it is not law, we cannot begin to deal with the 20 million acres of urban/wildland interface that are addressed within this legislation so that we will thin and clean and make them less susceptible to fire.

What is the picture here? Am I getting this wrong? Is this scenario I have on this picture now replaying itself? The fires are out in California, or at least we hope they are nearly out. But they will come again. Here is the reason they will come again. Here is a map of the United States. All these red areas—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. CRAIG. I ask for 1 additional minute.

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

Mr. CRAIG. The red on this map demonstrates not 20 million acres but 90 million acres of class 3 lands that are dead and dying and phenomenally susceptible to fire. See right down here in southern California where the fires burn, that red land that was looked at in 2000, which we said was going to burn? It burned: 3,400 homes, 20 lives, billions of dollars worth of assets. Now a silent filibuster on the part of Democratic leadership says we will not allow the bill to go forward? I hope I am wrong. I was not wrong yesterday. I understand they are still blocking a unanimous consent request to appoint conferees so the House and the Senate can work out their differences, so we can get at the business of being the good stewards of our public lands the public wants us to be and somehow, some way, treat our lands and deny wildfire to other areas of the country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Three minutes.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, the Senator from Idaho is entirely correct. What is going on here is a filibuster over naming of conferees. As a part of the normal legislative process, you send Members to a conference with the House to resolve the differences. In effect, a Healthy Forests bill is now being filibustered without the naming of conferees. The differences between the Senate and the House cannot be resolved. Unless conferees are named, the 80-to-14 vote we had here in the Senate just last week is meaningless, absolutely meaningless. No legislation to protect our forests, our people, our firefighters, and our homes can move

forward while the appointment of conferees is being filibustered.

While efforts to solve this critical legislation may seem illogical or even callous in the face of the disaster we have witnessed in California on the nightly news, mind you, what is simply unbelievable is that the legislation to prevent catastrophic fires such as these was filibustered just over a year ago. Last year when the risk of catastrophic forest fires was clear and immediate and action was needed, there was an effort to block even the consideration of amendments to the Interior appropriations bill that would have reduced the sort of hazardous fuels that have set ablaze southern California. We knew this was a problem last year. We knew it needed to be addressed. But time and time again we have been prevented from moving forward. That was then and this is now. Now that 22 lives have been lost, 800,000 acres have been burned, and 3,400 homes have been destroyed, you would expect Congress might have gotten the message to get the lead out and get the job done. But some in the Senate just do not get it.

As the Senator from Idaho pointed out, the American people have a right to basic safety and security, which this bill provides. After all we have seen, they have the right to ask: Why in the world is this bill being delayed by 1 second? We saw this bill move at lightning speed by a huge majority last week. Now it is stalled and likely to fail in this session of Congress.

How many acres must incinerate, how many homes must burn, and how many lives must be lost before we move forward on the Healthy Forests conference?

During the last year, 27 firefighters lost their lives fighting blazes such as those this bill intends to diminish. Would it be today that my friends in the Senate will move forward to appoint conferees and finally pass this much-needed legislation into law or will the Senate, like Nero, fiddle while the Nation burns?

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL CONSUMER CREDIT REPORTING SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2003

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to consideration of S. 1753, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1753) to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act in order to prevent identity theft, to improve the use of and consumer access to consumer reports, to enhance the accuracy of consumer reports, to limit the sharing of certain consumer information, to improve financial education and literacy, and for other purposes.