

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COCHRAN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

PROGRESS IN IRAQ

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I want to comment on an opportunity I had on Saturday to meet with Ambassador Bremer shortly after his arrival from Iraq. And we met, for a short period of time, with Senator WARNER and Representatives LEWIS and MURTHA to talk a little bit about what is going on on the ground in Iraq, specifically with coalition provisional authority, what their role is, how much progress is being made in rebuilding Iraq.

It is so difficult for all of us, in our briefings, where we are getting information secondhand, thirdhand—we are watching the news on television and reading it in the papers, and you get slivers of information—it is very tough to put in perspective what is actually going on in this vast country, where we know we are rebuilding not just from the war several weeks ago but from 10 years of neglect—indeed, 30 years of neglect. It is hard to assess, in terms of health care and water and schools and roads, where we are. You really see very little in terms of progress being made based on the information that filters through to us.

That is really why, as a prelude to some of the things we will hear tomorrow, Ambassador Bremer is going to come and visit with us in the Senate, where we will have a discussion. He is briefing the administration today, and he had several very public addresses on Sunday. But what he has to say is astonishing in lots of different ways, but mostly I think because of the relative silence in the press about the conditions on the ground in terms of progress, in terms of improvement.

After talking to Ambassador Bremer, it is clear to me that we are making real progress, demonstrable progress, day to day, week to week, in Iraq. Just as one example, I very specifically asked about food and asked about health care. Today, based on all objective measures, and as reinforced by Ambassador Bremer, there is no food crisis in Iraq. Indeed, there is no health care crisis in Iraq right now, today. The provision of basic utilities is improving daily, as is the overall public health situation. Indeed, I believe the Ambassador said that next week there will be a second immunization day nationwide scheduled.

When I asked about basic health care services, the Ambassador replied that they have been restored to about 90

percent in the north and 80 percent in the south and about 75 percent in the mid region around Baghdad.

When I asked about specific hospitals, I was told that over 200 hospitals—I don't know the exact number; there are over 200 hospitals in Iraq—all of those hospitals are now operational, in service.

Much of Iraq is near the prewar service conditions for water. When I speak of water conditions, I include sewage and the like. But what is interesting, and what we have to constantly remind ourselves, is that the country has been in a state of deterioration over the last 15 years, with no money invested in clean water, servicing that water, getting water to the people, and sewage plants. So even prewar conditions were very poor. But then we had the impact of the war. We have some sabotage going on right now. But now we are just about up to the prewar service conditions. We still have a long way to go to get back to the sort of conditions we would say are acceptable.

In terms of security, while lawlessness and entrenched Saddam loyalists continue to obstruct and hinder recovery efforts, progress has been made on the security front as well. Large-scale looting has stopped, has come to an end. Where there were once, not that long ago, empty roads, empty streets, and deserted markets, there are now bustling sidewalks with all sorts of items being sold, from shoes to satellite dishes to basic utensils. Now you see traffic back on the streets and even traffic jams.

Except for the small, central area—an important area but a small area—encompassing Tikrit and Baghdad, security throughout the rest of Iraq has improved. Indeed, more than 80 percent of the country is living in a more secure environment than they were before the war. Mr. President, 34,000 Iraqi police have been rehired, and 30,000 are on duty right now. Additionally, over 1,000 guards have been hired to protect 87 sites just in Baghdad alone.

Also, we hear, again: Is it just the United States? Ambassador Bremer will share with us the participation and cooperation we are receiving from around the world. We are not going it alone. He has mentioned, and continues to mention, the international constabulary teams that are from Italy and Spain that will serve as a bridge between the combat forces and the police.

The one distressing area we hear about every morning when we wake up or late at night is the distressing news of guerrilla activity and attacks on our troops. Indeed, our hearts go out to the families who have been affected and continue to be affected by this loss of loved ones. But it is important for us to understand we are not fighting a large-scale insurgency at this point in time. We are fighting the dead-enders from the old regime, the former Baathists. They have no popular support in Iraq. They will not return to power.

In addition to improving the security of the country, the coalition is also working hard to generate a thriving Iraqi economy. Again, we have to mention, however, that the Iraqi economy has been grossly mismanaged for more than 30 years. By his own estimates, Iraq suffered from employment levels at 50 percent before the war. Before the war, at least 30 percent of the GDP was spent just on the military—not on building infrastructure or refurbishing infrastructure, not on water supply or sewage plants or health or education.

Saddam Hussein had run the country into the ground: 50 percent unemployment; 30 percent of the GDP, the gross domestic product, spent on the military. Saddam's government spent zero on capital goods. And, yes, there were lavish palaces. There were manmade lakes, luxury yachts, and cars. Saddam spent untold billions on himself and his regime, but for the Iraqi people, for the people themselves, he left them a country with an infrastructure, as we witness today, that is brittle, that is antiquated, and, indeed, is susceptible to breakdown.

I mention this because, at least in my conversations with the Ambassador, it is clear we need for us and the American people to understand that part of this reconstruction is going to be reconstruction from the war but mainly reconstruction from the last 10, 15, 20 years of this tyrannical, oppressive regime.

As we look at the economy, I am fascinated by the dispensing fund which has been set up that is financing and will continue to finance construction projects and reconstruction projects that are carried out by the Iraqis themselves.

It is currently employing Iraqi construction firms to carry out the restoration of that national infrastructure. The coalition is paying salaries, paying pensions. It is paying the army and buying crops from farmers. And these are the first steps toward building and rebuilding that economy, a functioning economy, and indeed they are vital steps. And they are under way. Freedom is coming to the Iraqi people. Freedom is coming to support their economy.

In terms of democracy itself, the coalition is leading Iraq toward a functioning democracy. It was just a little over a week ago, just 8 days ago, that the governing council of Iraq was established. The council comprises 25 political leaders from across Iraq. Its immediate responsibilities include the appointment of ministers, the creation of a 2004 budget, and a constitutional process. It is remarkable that these 25 will be charged with sitting down and writing a constitution really from scratch.

The governing council will be responsible for creating a constitutional process, not just the writing but the actual debate as to what should be in the constitution. Once the constitution is drafted, then free elections will take

place. That will create a sovereign Iraqi government. When that government is created, the coalition provisional authority's work is essentially done, but it does take time. It does take patience. It does take time to rebuild the economy, to establish the security that the people of Iraq deserve.

I welcome the ambassador to the Senate tomorrow to hear of his firsthand experiences and to help paint that perspective which makes it much easier for us both to view the news and the information that is given to us so we can make appropriate policy decisions. It is vitally important that we have that complete perspective and that full view of the Iraqi situation. We will stay the course. The Iraqi people, of course, depend on us to stay the course. It will take time. It will take patience. It will take determination.

It is astounding to me that even in defeat Saddam has the power seemingly to turn the free world against itself and divert the media's attention from his monstrous crimes. For the last week and a half we have had a glossing over of the atrocities this man had committed. I appeal to my colleagues to look at the Iraqi people, at this crucial turning point in their history, and allow the Iraqis for the first time in 30 years to really taste what freedom is all about.

We talk all the time in this Chamber about helping, reaching out to help the oppressed and helping the downtrodden. Now is the time to ask: Are Iraqis in some way unworthy, are 300,000 missing people in Iraq merely a statistic? Every day our soldiers are turning up mass graves full of the bones of men, women, and children who have been hacked down literally by Saddam's men. We are beginning to see these images. We in this body have had the opportunity to talk to our Senate colleagues who have visited Iraq recently. There are literally tiny skeletons strewn in the dust alongside these once-adored little plastic baby dolls. The images are coming back to us to demonstrate the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein.

We cannot, we should not look away. We will not look away. We know this will take time.

On the question of weapons of mass destruction, we know, and indeed we have those horrifying pictures, that Saddam used chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction against his neighbors and his own people. Last week on the floor I talked about my opportunity to visit directly in my office with Kurdish physicians, who are still practicing today, who talked about the thousands of Kurds, Saddam's own people, who were killed by the chemical weapons of Saddam Hussein. Indeed, these Kurdish physicians tell me they are still taking care of people today who suffered the morbidity of having been exposed to chemical weapons, those who were fortunate enough to survive.

Furthermore, Saddam's quest for nuclear weaponry is well known. It is in-

disputable. One only need ask the most elemental question: For what purpose were nuclear scientists on Saddam's payroll? Indeed, the Senator from Florida, Mr. GRAHAM, told Fox News Sunday:

What we're concerned about with Iraq is its intention and capabilities to develop weapons of mass destruction, and the merger of that capability with terrorist groups. That is the ultimate nightmare scenario.

The nightmare is over. A bloody tyrant no longer rules in Iraq. A man who without qualm or regret murdered members of his own family and tens of thousands of his own citizens has been removed from power. The perpetrator of one of the past century's most gruesome crimes against humanity, the use of chemical weapons on thousands of innocent Kurdish civilians, is no longer free to pursue such weapons. The aggressor in the gulf war who a decade ago invaded his neighbor only to be driven out by a mighty coalition no longer threatens the volatile region of the Middle East. Iraq is no longer a playground for Saddam and his demented offspring. Iraq is finally and thankfully on the road to liberation.

Yes, it will be a bumpy road. It will take time. Even America was not built in a day. We are rebuilding, not just from the war but from 30 years of neglect. Today we should be celebrating the historic opportunity before the Iraqi people to build a democracy that respects the rule of law, that values life, that protects the God-given rights of every Iraqi citizen. We should lend them our strength and our competence as they face the difficult journey ahead. There can be no other course of action.

I believe that when all is said and done, Iraq will proudly stand among the nations of free people.

FAIRNESS IN ASBESTOS INJURY RESOLUTION ACT OF 2003

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to inform my colleagues that I have raised an objection to proceeding to S. 1125. Although I support finding a solution to the asbestos litigation crisis, there are a number of problems with this bill as currently drafted regarding the tax treatment of the asbestos fund. These problems affect the tax treatment of the amounts paid into and received from the asbestos fund. If not remedied, there could be serious adverse tax consequences to the companies, the asbestos fund, and, most importantly, the beneficiaries. These tax issues are within the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee, I believe that S. 1125 should be referred to the Finance Committee, but in the event it is not, the bill should be held from the floor until the Finance Committee can report a separate tax title for floor consideration.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of the De-

partment of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program. Last week, we passed a Defense appropriations bill that includes \$150 million in funding for this program. In the more than 10 years since its inception, I have worked with many of my colleagues to ensure that this groundbreaking program continues to have the strong level of support necessary to give researchers the essential resources they need to discover the keys to curing and preventing breast cancer.

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women. It accounts for 30 percent of all cancers in women. In the United States in 2002 alone, it is estimated that 203,500 women were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer while 40,000 women lost their lives to this disease. These women are our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our friends. Research toward a cure cannot bring those loved ones back to us, but we hope it will spare thousands of future tragedies and provide hope for women currently struggling with this devastating disease.

Earlier this year, as I have for the past several years, I coordinated a letter, along with Senators LEAHY and others, requesting that the Defense appropriations for fiscal year 2004 contain \$175 million in funding for the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program. This letter received the strong bipartisan support of 66 senators. Although budgetary constraints did not permit funding at the requested level, the fiscal year 2004 Defense appropriations bill does contain \$150 million for this program. Given the challenges of this year's budget, I am pleased that the appropriation bill contains such a strong level of support.

The research made possible by the Breast Cancer Research Program may benefit not only the victims of breast cancer but of countless other diseases as well. This program fills a unique role in offering awards that fill gaps in ongoing research and complement initiatives sponsored by other agencies. The program supports research and training awards that promote the investigation of innovative ideas and a strong workforce of scientists in this critical field. In an analysis of this program the Institute of Medicine said:

The Program fills a unique niche among public and private funding sources for cancer research. It is not duplicative of other programs and is a promising vehicle for forging new ideas and scientific breakthroughs in the nation's fight against breast cancer.

In just over a decade since its inception, the DOD Breast Cancer Research Program already has shown great success. The flexibility of this program helps to maximize the limited resources available. I applaud the strong support of this program and want to stress that the intent of reviewing alternative funding sources is to strengthen breast cancer research efforts and not to affect funding for the current program. I am concerned about