

this place. If we rear up temples, they will crumble in the dust. But if we work upon immortal minds and imbue them with principles with the just fear of God and the love for our fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something that will brighten to all eternity.

That is what it is really all about here. This is more than just a bureaucratic struggle over who has control over what happens. It is about trying to make sure that the foundations and the underpinnings of America and the great principles that have made us the greatest Nation in the history of the world remain in the hearts of the coming generations. That is certainly my belief, and I yield to the gentleman to express his perspective.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, there is not much I can add to Daniel Webster or the gentleman's rendition of Daniel Webster.

On occasion I have an opportunity to give a tour of the Capitol at night. One of the places I go to is the other body. I go to the desk that was Daniel Webster's desk and tell the stories about him. He was a great orator, a very wise man, as the gentleman has quoted him. I think his quotes would be a very appropriate place to end this Special Order.

□ 1730

A LOOK BACK ON THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PORTER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight along with fellow members of the Congressional Black Caucus to discuss the ongoing war in Iraq. As you well know, tomorrow will mark the 1-year anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am sure you would agree, Mr. Speaker, that this is one anniversary that will not be commemorated with a joyous celebration. Instead, this anniversary will be met with somber reflection upon those lives, both military and civilian, that were lost or forever changed as a result of this tragic war.

Just last year, Mr. Speaker, President Bush told the American people, and I quote, "I want Americans and all the world to know that coalition forces will make every effort to spare innocent civilians from harm." Yet just 1 year later, the New York Times is reporting that somewhere between 3,000

and 5,000 innocent Iraqis have been killed as a result of this war. In fact, as of yesterday, there have been 566 Americans, 59 Britains, 5 Bulgarians, 1 Dane, 1 Estonian, 17 Italians, 2 Poles, 10 Spaniards, 2 Thai and 3 Ukrainians that have died in Iraq. And according to the Pentagon, there have been over 3,000 U.S. troops wounded. Those troops are some of the same people that I see in Walter Reed when I visit.

I was just at Walter Reed 2 weeks ago. When I see the young men and women who have gone off into war, many of them coming back missing a leg, an arm, two legs, many of them feeling a bit disoriented, many of them feeling confused, many of them just simply trying to get, as one soldier said, from one day to another, again, this commemoration will not be a joyous one.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Congressional Black Caucus wholeheartedly believe in the principles of peace. We also believe in the principles of freedom as well as a necessity for America to provide security for all of her citizens. But we also wholeheartedly believe in protecting the sanctity of human life.

Mr. Speaker, just last year, President Bush convinced the Nation that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and thereby posed an imminent threat to our national security. And while there have been questions as to whether our data from the CIA and other organizations was accurate, the fact still remains to this day that no weapons of mass destruction have been found. I think, Mr. Speaker, that that is one of the things that makes it so painful for so many of the families. We see them on network television and we see them on the cable shows, those families who say that they believe in this country, that they raised their boys and girls as little children to put their hands up to their hearts and to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. They taught them to be patriotic. They taught them to stand up for what they believe in. They taught them to stand up for the Office of the President, but, more significantly, to stand up for one of the greatest countries in the world. And so from little children they stood up and they said, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

Those parents who now see their sons and daughters in many instances sadly coming back in sealed caskets, coming back with limbs missing, some of them have begun to ask the question, Why is it that we went to war? For when we went to war, Mr. Speaker, they did not hear the term "regime change." That is not what they thought. They thought that there was imminent danger. They thought our country was in deep trouble. I am sure that as they stood at the air bases and as they stood at the train stations and as they waved good-bye to their sons, to their husbands, their wives, to their sisters,

their brothers, their friends, they said they are going off because of these weapons of mass destruction that the President had told them about.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here to beat up on the President because that is not appropriate. But I am here to remind us of why we went to war. I think that so often what happens is that we get so caught up in the political fray that is going on that we forget that when those parents stood at those various departing stations that they thought they were going for one reason, and then once the war got started and moved forward and as weapons of mass destruction were not found, we then began to hear new reasons.

And so it is when the President said that we were going to destroy these weapons, and although I must say that the Congressional Black Caucus begged on this floor the President to think very carefully before going to war, this Congressional Black Caucus begged, because we said that the number one thing that we must always protect is the lives of human beings, be they American soldiers, be they American civilians, or be they the Iraqi innocent people, we must always look at life as the number one priority. But then we went to war.

But before we went to war, we asked the President, Are American lives in imminent danger? We asked the question over and over and over again. Sadly, back then, we could not get an answer. But the implication was that we had major, major problems and that these weapons of mass destruction could be released at any time and could do so much harm.

We asked other questions, too. One of those questions was as we proceed with this war, how is it going to be paid for? Who is going to pay for it? The President was very generous in an answer when he talked about the war.

I shall never forget sitting in one of these seats as I listened to him. One of the things that he said was that this war had come to us, we did not go to it. He went on to say that we had to act now and we had to act so that our children and our grandchildren and their offspring would not have to deal with this issue and would not have to pay for this. And so again our soldiers went off to war, believing that as they marched onto the soil of Iraq that they were making sure that the weapons of mass destruction, when found, would be done away with so that no harm would not only come to the Iraqi people but to the world.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but ask, if the ultimate goal of this preemptive war was to disarm Saddam Hussein, was our mission really accomplished? Could we have reached the same end by utilizing a different means? Day after day as I listen to my colleagues come upon this floor and talk about how it is that we now have Saddam Hussein in custody and how we have gotten rid of this tyrant and we have locked up this person who was

just a person that did so much harm to so many people, I ask myself the question, Was that the reason that we went into war from the beginning? After all, we still have not yet found, by the way, the weapons of mass destruction that were supposed to have caused this preemptive war.

By the way, that is another issue that we brought up, the whole issue of preemption. The Congressional Black Caucus, before this war came about, said that one of our major concerns was that we were committing a preemptive strike; that is, that we were going into a war of more or less prevention and certainly one, if one goes away from what we normally would do, and this preemptive strike is a major thing because that is something that the United States does not do; but the fact is that going into a preemptive strike caused us a lot of concern because we began to ask the question, Well, what are we trying to prevent?

That is where the question of imminent danger came in. Again, that question was never answered. And to be frank, when we look back at it, I do not think this country was in imminent danger. In essence, we have traded over 600 coalition lives and that of countless civilians for that one brutal dictator. One year later, we must ask, was it worth it? Was it worth it to the young man in my district, one of the first casualties of the war?

I shall never forget, Mr. Speaker, as his father heard about his death and cried out, Why is it that my son has died? He wanted to know, that is, Sergeant Walters-Bey's father wanted to know why his son had died. I shall never forget going to the funeral and standing there as he begged me for an answer to the question with tears rolling down his face, Why has my son died? His father was very clear. He had read the papers, he had watched the newscasts. He said to me, Mr. Speaker, "I am all for doing whatever is necessary to support this country. My son was for whatever was necessary to support this country. But I question what this war was all about."

And so, Mr. Speaker, I have asked time and time again if we had enough intelligence to determine that Saddam Hussein was hiding chemical and biological weapons then, why has the Intelligence Community not been able to lead us to those weapons? It is no wonder that the world leaders are now challenging our credibility.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the truth hurts, but the President need not blame others for the predicament that he has caused. It is no secret that our standing around the world has plummeted as a result of President Bush's foreign policy. Spain, a country that stood with President Bush just 1 year ago and supported this preemptive war, is now calling the United States occupation a fiasco.

Just today, Poland, a country which has about 2,400 troops in Iraq and was a strong supporter of the invasion, is

saying that it was misled about the threat from Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction.

□ 1745

Unfortunately, the tide seems to be beginning to turn against the United States. Mr. Speaker, I contend that in a multicultural society bolstered by a global economy, there is absolutely no room for a unilateralist foreign policy.

Following President Bush's pronouncement of war last year, the Vatican offered this response: "Whoever decides that peaceful means under international law" that was put at our disposition "have been exhausted assumes a serious responsibility before God, his own conscience, and his country."

I have often said, Mr. Speaker, a hundred years ago none of us were here and a hundred years from now, none of us will be here. The question is what do we do to make our time on this Earth the best that it can be? And perhaps the greater question is, how do we make the lives of others the best that they can be?

Let us seize upon this moment to begin working with international leaders to correct our current course in order that history would reflect kindly upon us as a Nation. One year later, Mr. Speaker, we must reclaim the moral high ground for the sake of our children and those generations yet unborn. I have often said that our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see. Our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see. We cannot allow our children, through our actions today, to send a message of war, arrogance, and bloodshed to that future.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "The chain reaction of evil, hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars, must be broken; or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation."

On this 1-year anniversary, let us not only contemplate how to better secure our homeland, but let us also contemplate how to secure the peace. One of the things that is so fascinating in an article that I recently read where a young man who was a medic in this war and is now home and he wished to remain anonymous, he was stationed at the Baghdad airport as a medic, and he talked about how he had served in previous wars, and he talked about how it was interesting how different it was because the young people that come back, the soldiers that come back today, a lot of times the public never has an opportunity to see our fallen. And he went on to say that "from what I gather, it used to be that the President would go out to the area to meet the deceased soldiers coming in. They would drape caskets and they would actually watch and give a moment of silence as the coffins came in." He went on to say, and this is a soldier, "The Bush administration felt that this was too much for Americans to handle. So they secured that part of the ceremony" and he said that "no one knows when that fallen soldier comes home.

He went on to say, "It is an injustice to the military because you gave your life to the country and the country should give something back to you. Even just a moment of silence. Every day that someone dies, the flag should be lowered to half staff, not just because a politician dies." He went on to say, "Those guys are good people. They work hard. They do anything and everything that is asked of them, and they gave the ultimate sacrifice. It should not be that you have to go to a Web site to find out who died."

So on this 1-year anniversary, although we do not see their faces, in towns and communities all over our country, people are experiencing the pain of war. Many of them are going to funerals, and our prayers go out with them. Many of them finding themselves in hospitals, and our prayers go out to them. Our prayers go out to all the families who have suffered losses. Our prayers also go out to all of our military who have gone forth to do what they had been called upon to do by our Commander in Chief. We pause on this 1-year anniversary to simply say to them, we thank them. We thank them for putting their lives in harm's way. We thank them for standing up. We thank them for being counted.

And as Swindoll, the great theologian, has often said, It is the things that you do when you are unknown, unseen, unappreciated, and unapplauded that truly matter.

So we in the Congressional Black Caucus refuse, as we did before the war, to be silent. We must raise our voices as we said then, as we begged the President not to go to war, and now that so many of our soldiers have gone on, our civilians have gone on, innocent Iraqi people have gone on, so many have been injured, we again raise our voices. Only this time we raise our voices to recognize those whose names will appear in a local paper or may appear in one or two paragraphs of some article talking about casualties in Iraq. We raise them and say to all of them, to those who have gone on, to those who have been injured, to those who are still in Iraq, to those who have come home for the 2-week leave and are about to go back, to those who believe so strongly in our country, they are no longer unseen, unnoticed, unappreciated, and unapplauded. We pause to say to them "thank you."

And so, hopefully, Mr. Speaker, as America goes to bed tonight, perhaps all of us need fall on our knees and ask God or at least whisper a prayer or have a moment of silence to recognize all of those who I have just mentioned who have given so much to make sure this country stays strong.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. HARMAN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal business.