

Throughout the 1990s, the United States took on other post-conflict reconstruction and stability operations in Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, Northern Iraq, and East Timor.

More recently and most significantly, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have compelled the United States to shoulder much of the burden for two enormously complex post-conflict operations. Despite our experiences in the 1990s and the crucial importance of the effort to stabilize Iraq and Afghanistan, these most recent efforts have been improvised affairs, led by the Department of Defense, which has pieced together personnel and expertise across the U.S. Government.

Our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, and indeed that of the 1990s and the past 15 years, has made clear that this Nation needs a centralized civilian capability to plan for and to respond to post-conflict situations and other complex contingencies.

Last fall, Senators RICHARD LUGAR and JOSEPH BIDEN assembled an extraordinary bipartisan group of experts from inside and outside the government to study how best to reorganize the foreign affairs agencies to improve our ability to meet the challenges of the post-conflict operations.

Drawing on the discussions with these experts and administration officials, Senators LUGAR and BIDEN introduced the Stabilization and Reconstruction Civilian Management Act of 2004. In introducing the bill, Senator LUGAR said that it was his intention "not to critique past practices, but rather to improve our stabilization and reconstruction capability for the future."

In that spirit, my colleague, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), and I recently introduced H.R. 3996, which is the House companion to the Lugar-Biden legislation. This bill will establish a Stabilization and Reconstruction Coordinating Committee, chaired by the National Security Advisor.

It will authorize the creation of an office within the State Department to coordinate the civilian component of stabilization and reconstruction missions.

It will authorize the Secretary of State to create a Response Readiness Corps, with both an active duty and reserve component that can be called upon to respond to emerging international crises.

It will have the Foreign Service Institute, the National Defense University, and the Army War College establish an education and training curriculum to meet the challenges of post-conflict and reconstruction operations.

This bill is an important first step in reconfiguring the U.S. Government to strengthen our ability to deal with complex emergencies overseas. It will institutionalize the expertise we have acquired in the past 15 years at great cost in blood and treasure, so that we do not have to learn and re-learn how

to do these operations each time we are forced to undertake them.

Finally, and most important, it will shift much of the burden for the planning and execution of these missions from the military to the civilian side of our government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

LOWERING COSTS BY ALLOWING REIMPORTATION OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, last week, prescription discount drug cards became available under Medicare. Should America's seniors and disabled Americans take a look at the new discount cards? Absolutely. Are discount cards a substitute for giving Americans access to safe, effective and affordable drugs? Absolutely not.

Some seniors and disabled Americans will probably save some money with the discount cards, but some cards may not cover the drugs that you use, and which drugs they cover and how big their discounts are may change once a week without notice, even though every senior will have to keep the same card the whole year. Even if your card covers your medicine, it may mean little, because the drug companies have already jacked the prices up 15, 20, or 25 percent.

President Bush and the FDA and our government allowed drug prices to go up 20 or 25 or 30 percent a year, yet then they say we are going to give a drug discount of 5, 10, or 15 percent. What a deal. At least it is a good deal for the drug companies, if not America's seniors.

What to do instead is to allow reimportation; allow American wholesalers, American drug retailers to go in the world market and buy their prescription drugs from countries which actually do something to bring down drug prices.

Last year, a solid, bipartisan majority in this House passed a solid drug importation bill issuing a declaration of independence from the drug industry. But President Bush said no and the Republican leadership said no.

Last month, a bipartisan coalition introduced a comprehensive bill that could win an importation vote in the other body, but President Bush said no, and again the Republican leadership said no.

The Bush administration, the FDA, and opponents of free markets in medicine say importation is unsafe. They have claimed that drugs sold in Canada

and France and Germany, Israel, and Japan are not safe. Yet have we ever read a story about a Canadian or a French person or a German or a Japanese or an Israeli dropping dead in the streets of their countries because a drug is contaminated? Of course not. Those countries have FDAs similar to ours to protect the safety of their drugs.

Seniors in Ohio and throughout the country, in spite of the Bush administration claiming these drugs are unsafe on behalf of the drug industry, in spite of the FDA saying these drugs are unsafe, again on behalf of the prescription drug industry, seniors understand from personal experience that medicine sold in Canadian pharmacist is the same effective medicine sold here. It just happens to be one-third, one-half, one-fourth, sometimes, the price.

Now, the Bush administration and opponents of free markets in medicine say U.S. prices are high because other countries have forced the drug companies to sell the drugs for less there. They actually argue that if they can get drug prices higher in Australia and France and Germany that then the drug makers will just drop the price to Americans.

In fact, the Bush administration is putting pressure on the Australian Government through the negotiation of a trade agreement for the Australians to raise the prices they are paying to these drug companies for their drugs, with the implicit understanding, if you believe this, that the U.S. drug companies will voluntarily lower their prices.

Johns Hopkins University health economist Gerald Anderson told the Wall Street Journal last week, Say that you are the Pfizer CEO, and you go to your board and say, guess what? We just got a great deal in Australia on our drugs, so we are going to lower our prices in the U.S. You would be fired if you were the CEO of Pfizer and said that. Of course they are not going to do that.

These are giant multinational corporations whose profit margins dwarf the profit margins of any other industry in America. Drug companies in 2001 earned profit margins of 18 percent, three times the profit margins of other Fortune 500 companies. This has been the most profitable industry in America for 20 years running, with the lowest tax rates. They are companies that clearly have had taxpayers in this country do a lot of their research and development, yet they continue to charge Americans more than any other country in the world.

The reason for that is that the U.S. Congress and the U.S. President has simply stood by and let the drug companies continue to raise prices. It might have something to do with the fact that the drug industry gives George Bush millions of dollars for his campaign. The word on the street in Washington is that President Bush will get \$100 million from the drug industry for his reelection.

My Republican friends on the other side of the aisle, especially their leadership, have raised millions of dollars from the drug industry. As a result, the drug industry and the insurance industry wrote the Medicare bill. That is why the Medicare bill simply will not work the way that it should, that is why drug profits continued to go up, that is why seniors continue to pay two and three and four times what they do in Canada.

We have got to break the leash and the connection between the drug industry and the Republican Party and President Bush.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXPLAINING THE OIL FOR FOOD SCANDAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, Americans are just beginning to read and hear of something called the Oil for Food scandal. Well, what does that mean? What does that term mean? And, more importantly, why should Americans care?

Well, Mr. Speaker, for just a few minutes, I would like to try to answer those questions.

Over a dozen years ago, Mr. Speaker, right after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the world moved quickly to impose sweeping international sanctions on Iraq. Those sanctions were designed to force Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait and to follow international law on matters ranging from human rights to supporting terrorism to ending any pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

Because our beef was with Saddam Hussein and his evil regime and not with the Iraqi people, the Oil for Food program was created. It was established as a humanitarian way through the United Nations to try to offer some relief to the Iraqi people. It was intended to allow the Iraqi Government to sell limited quantities of oil, so long as the proceeds were used to purchase food, medicine, and other essentials for the Iraqi people.

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As I said, it was a humanitarian, compassionate gesture.

Now there is a scandal. There is a scandal, Mr. Speaker, because of growing evidence of the Oil For Food program was not only mismanaged, but used by Saddam Hussein for diabolical purposes. Some say the program is twisted by mismanagement. Some say it was twisted by corruption and greed.

Still others say that it was twisted by an anti-American agenda and bias.

So what happened that is so scandalous? Well, for one thing, Saddam Hussein used money, lots and lots of money, to buy things other than necessities for the Iraqi people. Not just small things like alcohol and cigarettes, but he used over \$2 billion to build palaces, monuments to himself and his evil regime. Even worse, he used some of that money to build his weapons and to launch his weapons program. This was money that would have gone to his people. Instead, this money went to perpetuate his evil regime and his lifestyle.

Secondly, because of alleged mismanagement and corruption within this U.N. program, billions of dollars that were procured are now missing. This was money that should be in the hands of the Iraqi people. Now more than ever, at the very time they need money for reconstruction, money to get back on their feet, money to build new schools, money to get ahead and build a brighter future, that money, \$10 billion worth, that money is gone.

Finally, and worst of all, some of this Oil For Food money was used by Saddam Hussein to pay off his cronies, allegedly to buy influence around the world, perhaps even in the United Nations itself, and to thwart the economic sanctions and diplomacy that we all hoped and prayed would avoid war. Lord forbid that this last point is true, because if it is true, if in fact some of this money was used to buy influence in the United Nations and other countries, it means that some of this money, it means that the Oil For Food program, it means that individuals within the United Nations and the international community, that their actions thwarted diplomacy and prevented sanctions from happening. And because diplomacy and sanctions failed, we went to war. And that means, Mr. Speaker, something that we all dearly hope is not true; that means that this corruption of this program led to the loss of American lives.

Mr. Speaker, this scandal involves billions of dollars, it involves mismanagement, it involves corruption, it involves illegal activity, and it may involve the kind of activity that costs lives, has lengthened this conflict, and perhaps even led to war.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks, I and a number of other members of committees like the Committee on International Relations will come to this floor to ask publicly some important questions of the United Nations to try to get some answers, to learn more about the Oil For Food program, to find out whether there was, in fact, the corruption that we fear, and to try to get some answers. The American people deserve answers. The families of servicemen deserve answers. All of us deserve answers.

As I have said, I dearly hope that what we have read and what we have heard is not true, because if it is, as

William Safire of the New York Times has said, it would make it the most far-reaching political and financial scandal in history.

FOREST SERVICE UNDERFUNDED TO FIGHT FOREST FIRES IN 2004

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, today, the Committee on Resources held a hearing on the coming fire season in the West. Officials of the Bush administration predicted that arguably, this could be the worst fire season in the Nation's history. So far, so good. They are looking out for our resources, our communities, our people.

Unfortunately, they went on to say that because the President shorted the budget and the Congress agreed with the President, that there is only about half the money in that budget that they expect they are going to need to fight the fires this year. Last year, a pretty bad fire season, but not the worst in history, the Forest Service ran out of money in August. Now, they cannot stop fighting the fires, so what do they do? Well, they go out and rob other Forest Service programs that are already underfunded. Over the last few years, they have gone and canceled fuel reduction contracts; that is, preventing the intensity or the possibility or probability of future fires through thinning and other activities, they actually would rob that program to pay for fighting this year's fires. But they do not learn their lesson.

Over the last 5 years, the average spent to fight fires by the Federal agencies has been \$1.2 billion. So what did the President ask for and the Republican Congress give him in this year's budget? Mr. Speaker, \$600 million, one-half of that amount. We are going into the worst fire year in history with less than one-half of the 5-year average. Even worse, just a few days ago, the Bush administration grounded all the tanker planes, because they cannot coordinate between the FAA and the BLM and the Forest Service and they cannot work out some paperwork on certifying whether or not these planes are safe or not. So our first line of defense, the heaviest line of defense we have, that which I know has saved the lives of firefighters and has saved homes and communities, is grounded.

Fourteen months ago I anticipated this problem and wrote to the Forest Service and they said, oh, do not worry, we have a plan. Their plan is a whole bunch of small planes and helicopters and yes, they can perform a valuable function, but they cannot get very quickly to distant fires, they cannot drop the huge loads that are sometimes needed to save a fire crew or stop a fire from breaching a hill and going down into a community or engulfing a