

But let us look at the facts that differ from what the press tells us and what our friends on the other side of the aisle are saying. This is some of the help we have received from the INC. When we are being told that aluminum tubing was being procured that violated the sanctions, this turned out to be true. We were told that Saddam Hussein had buried much of his weapons programs or hidden them in dual-use facilities. This information from as early as 1991 and throughout the 1990s turned out to be true.

We were told Saddam Hussein had unmanned drones that could deliver bio or chemical weapons, and this turned out to be true. We are told by the INC and others that weapons were being shipped to Syria; and Dave Kay confirms that he agrees with that assessment, although the exact nature and amount of the weapons that were shipped to Syria still have to be determined.

The INC said that al Qaeda and its affiliated terrorist groups were being trained and harbored in Iraq, and this has been confirmed. We only have to review the terrorists caught recently in Jordan who admitted they fled Afghanistan to Iraq before the war to liberate Baghdad, and while in Iraq they received training and assistance in the use of poisons and bombs from Iraqi intelligence.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs said that the INC gave U.S. and coalition forces intelligence on a daily basis that saved American lives, stopped attacks, and deactivated roadside improvised explosives.

There are examples in the past that have failed to be covered by our friends on the other side of the aisle or by the press; but I think if we take just a moment, we can see the difficult nature of providing help to other countries and to people in other countries.

First of all, the U.S. Government provided hundreds of millions of dollars to the Taliban during the late 1990s in the hopes they would turn over Osama bin Laden. What did we get for our dollars at that point, and what did the Clinton administration explain to us?

The U.S. Government and others provided between \$3 billion to \$5 billion to the Aristide government in Haiti, and what did we get for our money? Haiti's gross domestic product declined by one-third, and crime and murder rates hit levels not seen since the Duvalier family ruled the country. Haiti became one of the major transshipment points for illicit drugs into this country, and now Aristide has left the country after robbing the treasury of every last dime.

During this great Haitian robbery by Mr. Aristide, a former Democratic congressman received a retainer of \$50,000 from the Haitian Government and Aristide to provide cover for this looting. The Haitian Parliament could not even meet during Aristide's rule for fear that he would have them killed.

Mr. Speaker, what is this fight all about? For the past 25 years, there has been serious disagreement in the U.S. Government and amongst our allies about the nature of Islamic fascism and the terrorist means we face. This problem was accentuated when the Oslo Peace Process was begun. Particularly during the Clinton administration, it was assumed that terrorism directed against the U.S., the Trade Center in 1993, the Khobar Towers in 1995, the Kenyan and Tanzanian embassies in 1998, the USS *Cole* in 2000, it was assumed those attacks were the work of a loose band of terrorists unconnected to any state sponsor or government. The Clinton administration assumed, therefore, that this was a problem of law enforcement, a point reiterated by many leading Democrats today.

The Peace Process was assumed to require the agreement of the Islamic regimes in the Middle East: Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Jordan. Mr. Speaker, these assumptions were proved incorrect. President Bush changed those assumptions into fighting the war against terror. Mr. Speaker, we need to have the facts.

The assumption was that once Israel made an adequate offer to the PLO, that the PLO in turn would reign in the terrorist groups attacking Israel.

General Zini, for example, in his latest book makes this very assumption that the PLO and Arafat were not responsible for the terrorist attacks against Israel in the first and second Intifadas. He says that once a peace deal is put on the table by Israel, Arafat will take care of the security issue.

The assumption was that none of these Islamic/Arab governments were supporting terrorism against the United States and the terrorism would stop once a deal was made between Israel and the PLO.

The Peace Process featured Secretary of State Christopher making some 70 visits with President Assad of Syria to negotiate Syria's support for the "Peace Plan".

The United States could not on the one hand be negotiating a peace deal with Syria and other Arab regimes, while at the same time holding them accountable for terrorism aimed at the United States and Israel.

President Bush fundamentally changed this paradigm.

In June 2002, the President said the PLO had to have new leadership that agreed that Israel had a right to exist as a sovereign country, something Arafat has never agreed to; just today, the Egyptian government is reportedly asking that Arafat resign and new PLO leadership be appointed.

The President also drew a strong link between states such as Iran and Iraq that support al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that new intelligence reveals that a Lt. Col. in the Iraqi intelligence service met with the pilots of the planes that crashed into the World Trade Center and Pentagon in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia in January 2000 where the 9/11 plot was begun; additional evidence connects Mohammed Atta, one of the key conspirators and pilot of one of the planes on 9/11, met with Iraqi intelligence in Prague, the Czech Republic on April 8, 2001.

If these states are training, financing and providing sanctuary, documents and weapons to these terrorist groups, then they have declared war on the United States. As National Security Adviser Rice has noted, "they are war with the United States, but we were not at war with them."

Even as we fight to protect this country, we have bureaucrats fighting an internal, inside the Beltway battle that is distracting from the larger and more important effort.

DRUG DISCOUNT CARD

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

Mr. HINCHHEY. Mr. Speaker, today is the first day that older Americans and the disabled can use their brand new prescription drug discount cards. Medicare beneficiaries, however, should use caution. Like everything else promised by the Bush administration and the Republican majority in this House, the prescription drug benefit is not all it was cracked up to be. Most seniors will find the benefits they already had through a State drug program, a Medigap plan, or coverage from a former employer may save them more money than the Medicare discount card.

Seniors' savings from the Medicare drug card will be negligible. Bush administration officials and Republican leaders have said that the Medicare drug cards would provide recipients with discounts of up to 25 percent on prescription drugs, but their friends in the pharmaceutical industry have corrected that. They say the savings will be no more than 17 percent.

But a more balanced study by the U.S. General Accounting Office pegged the savings even lower. The GAO found that the average savings produced by the Medicare drug cards was about \$5 per prescription. GAO's results also reveal that seniors could usually find a better deal by shopping around. Why should seniors be asked to pay a \$30 premium for these cards when they can get better deals by comparison shopping?

The meager benefits offered by the Medicare drug card were confirmed by another study, this one conducted by the minority staff of the House Committee on Government Reform, which demonstrated that the drug discount cards provide far less benefits to seniors than three simple alternatives: purchasing drugs in Canada, allowing the government to negotiate bulk purchases for seniors, and ordering through Internet pharmacies. The study found that drugs purchased with the Medicare drug card are an average of 72 percent more expensive than they would be if those same drugs were purchased in Canada. If the Federal Government negotiated the purchase of these drugs in bulk for Medicare beneficiaries, as it does for the Veterans Administration, prices then would be 75 percent less expensive than they would be with this Medicare drug card.

Seniors can get lower prices right now through Internet pharmacies, drugstore.com and costco.com, without signing up for a card and without paying an annual membership fee. Seniors could save 74 to 75 percent more than they will with the drug discount card without Federal Government spending any money at all. We could have legalized the reimportation of drugs from Canada, as a clear majority in this House voted to do. We could have allowed Medicare to negotiate fair prices for its 43 million beneficiaries. But instead, the Republican negotiators specifically put language in the bill that prevented that from happening, making it illegal.

Instead of enacting these fiscally responsible proposals that would be far more effective at reducing seniors' health care costs, the Bush administration and the Republican leadership of this Congress chose instead to protect and grow even larger the already enormous profit margins of the pharmaceutical industry.

While drug companies are required to cover at least one drug to treat most health conditions, they may not cover the drug that a beneficiary's doctor prescribes. It may not be possible to sign up with one plan that offers a discount for all of your prescriptions, but you can only sign up for one Medicare drug card at a time, and that has to last for 12 months. You cannot change for a year. The drug card will only be usable at certain pharmacies so seniors must research whether the card they are considering is accepted at a pharmacy nearby.

Some seniors will not have coverage outside of their home towns. There are a few national drug card plans, but most are regional. For seniors who travel frequently or spend part of the year in a different part of the country, the card they pick may not cover their prescriptions at all. Different drug cards will offer different prices on the same drug. Even with the same drug card plan, prices can vary from one pharmacy to another, and the drug card plans can change the drugs they cover and their prices, and they can do so every 7 days without notifying participants. This makes it nearly impossible for seniors to compare which plan gives them the best deal.

This program is intentionally and unnecessarily complicated in order to confuse seniors and reduce the benefits, even the small benefits that might be entailed in it. So this plan is too complicated, too complex, and far too expensive. There is a much better way of doing it, and we should get at it immediately.

Republicans rigged the system against seniors. The drug card—which should never have been necessary in the first place—leaves seniors with more uncertainty about their ability to afford medications than they have today.

Seniors shouldn't have to suffer through two years of uncertainty and meager benefits, before the real—though still completely inadequate—Medicare benefit begins.

The only reason that seniors are waiting two years is money: the GOP loaded up the bill with so many hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies to the pharmaceutical industry that they did not leave enough money to pay for seniors' benefits.

President Bush and Republican leaders said money was the reason that the drug benefit couldn't start sooner, offer more comprehensive benefits and lower out-of-pocket costs for seniors. They said that we simply couldn't afford a more generous prescription drug bill than the \$400 billion they had set aside—after the Bush tax cuts and huge increases in defense spending—to pay for Medicare reform.

The truth is that we're not spending \$400 billion for drugs for seniors. Republicans gave away 61 percent of that to private corporations.

\$339 billion of the Medicare reform bill goes to the Administration's friends in the pharmaceutical and insurance industries.

\$70 billion goes to private corporations for continuing to provide health care coverage to their retirees. These corporations were already providing retiree health coverage without any government subsidy. Now we'll be paying them to do what they were doing before without government support. And, because the subsidy comes with no strings attached, corporations can still drop retiree coverage entirely without warning.

\$139 billion in overpayments to the pharmaceutical industry. This legislation will increase the drug industry's sales volume and profits dramatically. Because the bill specifically prohibits Medicare from harnessing the buying power of its 43 million beneficiaries to secure lower prices, Medicare dollars—and seniors' own out-of-pocket expenses—are being used to purchase drugs at inflated prices. Seniors who sign up for the drug benefit will be forced to pay higher prices than the VA or HMOs pay for the same drugs. Drug company profits—already the highest of any segment of our economy—are expected to increase 37 percent as a result of this bill.

\$130 billion in overpayments to HMOs. Managed care options were added to Medicare because they were supposed to cost less per patient than traditional Medicare. Under the new law, we'll be paying HMOs as much as 25 percent more than health care costs under traditional Medicare. Even the GAO has confirmed that HMOs are overpaid, but that didn't stop the Republican leadership from increasing their payments again in the bill. Because HMOs tend to attract the healthiest seniors, they ought to be getting paid less, not more. Like the other corporate subsidies, HMO payments come with no strings attached—HMOs can pull in and out of communities, stranding seniors, whenever they please.

Seniors deserve better than this. They deserve a comprehensive and affordable drug benefit, one that they can count on for the length of their retirement. We could afford to give them one, but the Republican majority would rather subsidize private industry than needy seniors.

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

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

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order speech at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS)?

There was no objection.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT STARTS TODAY

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, here it is June 1, and the Medicare prescription drug benefit starts today. This drug benefit is a long time in coming. In fact, it is the missing link from when Medicare was passed back in 1965. The Medicare prescription drug benefit is going to occur in two phases, and the first phase starts today and that is the Medicare prescription drug discount card which is available to any senior calling 1-800-Medicare or logging on to the Internet, www.medicare.gov.

The formal program is choice based, consumer driven and affordable. In fact, low-income seniors will receive an extra \$600 subsidy this year and next year. When the full Medicare prescription drug benefit kicks in on January 1, 2006, seniors will have the choice whether or not to opt into the program. Taking the prescription drug benefit discount now in no way obligates a senior to a future Medicare prescription drug benefit in the year 2006.

The most important thing about this legislation is that for the first time it actually empowers seniors to make the best choices based on value. For the first time, a senior can call 1-800-Medicare or log onto the Web site medicare.gov, and if they know the name of their prescription drug, their dosage and their ZIP Code, they can find out which Medicare prescription drug card would be best for them, which would cover the medications they are taking, which would provide the best benefits. Whether it be a mail order pharmacy or a neighborhood pharmacy, seniors will have that information at their fingertips.

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Seniors are used to comparison shopping. They shop on line for cruises, they shop on line for clothes at various retail outlets. For the first time, they are going to have the ability to use that same consumer savvy with the purchase of their prescription drugs.

The site is far from perfect, and there will be additional improvements that