

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my reflections on a trip I recently took with the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), leader, and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES) to Iraq and Afghanistan. I think it is important to publicly discuss the situation in those countries because events there have implications for all of us here in our country, as well as for the future of our foreign policy.

We are less than 5 months from the planned transfer of sovereignty to a new Iraqi government. Yet it seems clear from talking to many groups in Iraq that the administration's proposed deadline for the transfer of power is unrealistic. Commanders we talked to indicated it would be logistically difficult, if not impossible, to conduct an election before July 1. There is no census. There are no registered voters. The likelihood of fraud would be great, and I think there is a strong likelihood that the United Nations representatives now in Iraq will reach the same conclusions. By the same token, Shia religious leaders in Iraq do not support the caucus system for choosing a new government that the administration has advocated.

Finally, I do not think we can transfer sovereignty to a new Iraqi government until the rules of engagement for our forces are agreed upon. We simply cannot afford to have restrictions on the ability of our forces to pursue terrorists and to protect themselves.

Simply put, we must handle the transition right, even if it means rethinking our original timeline. The outcome must be a government with legitimacy, a process that prevents civil war from erupting, and rules of engagement that leave our forces free to continue to fight against the insurgents.

A second related conclusion from my trip is that it is clear that whatever new government assumes power must not be seen as a puppet of the United States Government or it will lack legitimacy. One way to help build that legitimacy is to get NATO involved in helping to establish security and provide stability in Iraq, as they are already doing constructively in Afghanistan. NATO involvement will reinforce the perception that it is the international community, not just the United States, that wants a new representative government in Iraq to succeed. Bringing NATO troops to Iraq to supplement our forces will also likely reduce the number of American military casualties, something I know we are all concerned about.

My third conclusion about Iraq is that we are in a guerilla war there. It is not really terrorism because I do not think the attacks against Iraqi citizens and our forces are aimed just at terrorism. Their purpose is to prevent the installation of a new, stable regime and to expel our forces, a classic goal of guerrilla warfare.

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I also want to mention Afghanistan. The simple truth is we are short-changing our effort to establish a viable Federal government and rebuild the country of Afghanistan. I understand that, on the face of it, Afghanistan is not as strategically as important as Iraq, but our efforts there are critical.

Mr. Bin Laden and other leaders of al Qaeda and the leadership of the former Taliban regime remain at large. In the near term, the United States must bring renewed attention to our offensive operations there to flush those forces out. Over the long term, we need to ensure that a terrorist harboring the regime never again gains hold. If we poured half as many people and resources into Afghanistan as we have into Iraq, I think that country would be well on the way to recovering from the 20-plus years of warfare that have plagued that country.

With few natural resources, little infrastructure, and a long history of tribalism, Afghanistan has a long way to go. I do not think we are making progress as fast as we need to in order for the Karzai government to survive in the long term. Simply put, we need to do more in Afghanistan.

My final observation concerns our great men and women in uniform. They are doing a fantastic job under the most trying circumstances. They are living under the most arduous of conditions, and are literally putting their lives on the line every day. They are superbly trained, superbly led, and they are the finest force the world and our country have ever seen. We owe them a deep debt of gratitude. As we go into this budget cycle, we owe it to them to provide them everything they need in order to succeed, in Iraq as well as Afghanistan.

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

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

TRUE COST OF WAR TO BE HIDDEN UNTIL AFTER ELECTIONS

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

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I addressed the House last night on the subject of President Bush's State of the Union message and compared his words on that evening in this Chamber just some 3 weeks ago in which he said he would present to us a budget which paid for the war, and let me read his words exactly. "In 2 weeks, I will send you a budget that funds the war."

Well, 2 weeks later, the President failed to do that. He failed to include any of the cost for the conflict in Iraq

and Afghanistan in his budget. You might think that is just a conflict, maybe a miscommunication with speech writers. But yesterday on the Senate side in a very important hearing the service chiefs of the Marines, Army and Air Force all said that this funding gap, the possible failure of our forces in Afghanistan and Iraq to have the money that they need come this fall, could create serious consequences.

Let me read the article from today's New York Times. "In an unusual display of difference with the White House, the top officers of the Army, Marine Corps and Air Force all raised questions on Tuesday about how the Bush administration plans to pay for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq after the current financing runs out at the end of September.

"Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, three of the four chiefs of the Armed Services expressed concerns about a financing gap, perhaps of 4 months, for the two missions, whose combined cost is about \$5 billion a month.

"They were left out of President Bush's budget request for the 2005 fiscal year, with the administration saying it would make a supplementary request for up to \$50 billion probably next January, after the elections this year.

"I am concerned," General Peter J. Schoomaker, the Army Chief of Staff, said in response to a question from Senator Jack Reed, Democrat of Rhode Island, 'on how we bridge between the end of this fiscal year and whenever we could get a supplemental in the next year.'

"General Michael W. Hagee, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and General John P. Jumper, the Air Force Chief of Staff, agreed with General Schoomaker's concerns."

A little further down in the article, General Schoomaker stated, "We are all concerned about maintaining continuity of operations. We want to make sure that we minimize the bridge." He emphasized that the timing and mechanics of seeking a supplemental spending bill were up to the Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and White House officials. He said that he was simply describing the possible consequences for the Army.

Mr. Speaker, America knows we are at war. We know that 120,000 of our men and women in uniform are in daily, constant danger in Iraq, and 10,000 more troops are at danger in Afghanistan. Yet none of the cost of this war is in the President's budget. The President has said that he will get a supplemental request to us after the election. That is probably not time enough, according to these top military officials.

Our men and women in uniform deserve better treatment. They deserve full funding, full continuity of funding, and full, honest accounting of how much this operation costs, and the American taxpayer is ready to step up

to those needs. We should not hide the true cost until after the election and risk undercutting our men and women in uniform in the field when they are at war because of politics in this political season. Let us do better in this House to fully fund our men and women in uniform.

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

(Mr. KIRK 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 Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S GROWING CREDIBILITY PROBLEM

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, last week the President of the United States introduced a budget with a \$520 billion deficit. If we look across the spectrum, not only does this budget have a fiscal deficit of historic highs of \$521 billion, the budget has a credibility deficit, blaming 9/11 and corporate scandals for the creation of this deficit. In fact, the Bush administration is continually facing a growing credibility problem not just in fiscal terms but also in policy terms at home and also overseas. America's word must be respected abroad as well as here, but the administration's word is coming under question.

If we take it from issue to issue, whether it is on the deficit, and we are running a record-high deficit, and the President wants to claim to be a fiscally responsible President, but not once in any of his budgets has he introduced a budget that is either balanced or gets to a road to balance. Not once.

In November, this House debated a \$400 billion prescription drug bill, and yet we learn that all along the administration knew it cost \$550 billion. That is for a program that we debated and understood to be \$400 billion, and not the \$400 billion, not even the \$500 billion, is paid for, driving the American taxpayer as well as our seniors further into debt.

The other day they talked about the importance of manufacturing jobs, yet they cut the manufacturing extension program which has helped small- and medium-sized manufacturers compete in the world market and add jobs.

The other day, a senior adviser to the President for economic policy announced that outsourcing of jobs was a good thing for the economy.

Mr. Speaker, the outsourcing of American jobs are a good thing for the Indian economy, not the American economy. Any administration who has a top economic adviser who believes outsourcing of jobs is a good thing is an administration with a record that has lost three million jobs in 3 years.

Whether it is on the budget that is out of whack with our values and our principles and our priorities, and as Goldman Sachs and the international monetary funds have announced, it is not even a credible budget. There is not a cent or direction in how we are going to reduce this deficit.

This President, from day one when he came into office, had a surplus north of \$100 billion. In his last budget before his reelection, he submits a deficit of \$521 billion.

In the area of jobs, three million Americans since he has been President have lost their jobs. They fake an interest in offering a manufacturing extension program and then call for its election or cuts by two-thirds.

Take the funding of police. They have advocated the importance of helping police and firefighters, talked about funding them, and in the President's budget a billion dollars was cut from the police and over \$500 million from helping our firefighters.

If we take it from area to area, from section to section, this administration says one thing and then does another. The budget is a blueprint and a document representing the values, principles and priorities of the administration as well as for the United States. I cannot think of a worse example, to have a policy in which we are presented a budget with a \$521 billion deficit, record numbers for the country. They are numbers that in my view put us at grave economic risk. We are now beholden to the Chinese and Japanese to continue to buy our securities where, God forbid, at any moment if we need their support they hold our economic security and determine our economic future, which puts us in a terribly vulnerable position.

Across the board on any number of subjects, we can watch how this administration continues both here at home to have its word questioned and also overseas has its word questioned. When a President of the United States has a credibility gap like that, it is not only endangering in my view his administration but our own economic security as Americans. We can see from the value of the dollar and the way it is falling people's judgment about the importance of our word and credibility.

On the issue of weapons of mass destruction in the recent report, that, too, is another example, and a glaring example, where the word of this administration now will be questioned rather than heeded.

In closing, as written in Time magazine, "Any of those challenges may have been manageable. The problem was that each news cycle brought a new question about the President's

judgment and candor, which Democrats lost no time exploiting. Fiscal conservatives had been howling for months about a budget that seemed totally out of control."

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

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

BUSH SPIN-DOCTORS ALTER HEALTH DISPARITIES REPORT

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) has just talked about the credibility of this administration, and there was an incident which happened yesterday which I think was really quite stunning.

Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, came before the Committee on Ways and Means. I have known him a long time. He is a dedicated, hard-working public servant. He is a straight shooter. When he appeared before us, I reluctantly had to ask my old friend tough questions. His answers were stunning. They were stunning because, without equivocation, Tommy Thompson told the truth.

Tommy Thompson acknowledged that someone significantly altered a report on health disparities in America, and he was having none of it. This is the guy who ought to be in charge, and we need help. He told the truth and took the fall for the political spin doctors inside his own agency, inside the White House, or both. We commissioned a report by the Institute of Medicine, and when it came back, it was changed. The American people need to know who did this. Significantly altering a report about health disparities in America is a betrayal of public trust. People of color, everyone in America ought to be outraged and demand accountability.

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Political spin doctors turned science, and serious data about national health disparities affecting Native Americans, people of color and others, into a whitewash that taints anyone near it.

Let me give my colleagues an example. The first sentence of the original health disparities report circulated last June said, and I quote, "Inequalities in health care that affect some racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and geographic subpopulations in the United States ultimately affect every American." The alteration was, "The overall health of Americans has improved dramatically over the last century." One