

OIL PRICES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise to discuss oil prices, another problem vexing America. Everywhere I go in my State, people are just amazed that gasoline prices are through the roof. It is hurting everybody. There was a report last week that people were buying a little less food. You know you are getting down to the bare bones. Costs of everything could go up. Inflation, thankfully, has stayed low, but if energy prices stay this high for this long, they are going to get higher. What is so troubling is that we have the tools to bring the prices back down. The administration is fiddling while high-priced gasoline burns, if you will.

The No. 1 culprit is not the lack of refineries. Let me make clear: We do have a shortage of refineries. We have had a shortage for 15 years. The price has not been this high for 15 years. The price was a lot lower a year ago with the same number of refineries.

The problem is OPEC. OPEC has gotten together, led by the Saudis, and decided that the old ceiling of \$28 a barrel is no longer the ceiling. It is approaching \$40 a barrel. That is danger for our people, our economy. Senator CORZINE mentioned before, you see the great economic numbers and then you talk to average folks and they are having as much trouble paying the bills and making ends meet as they ever did before. My view of my role as Senator is to help those folks with their daily lives, not to just look at numbers in the newspaper and say, the numbers are good but, rather, to talk to average people and say: How are you doing? When I ask that, they say: Well, I would be doing a lot better if gasoline prices were lower.

We have a weapon. We have the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve's first and foremost purpose is to be there in an emergency. But we changed the law. I helped change it. It can be used when gasoline prices are too high as a temporary way of bringing them down. That is what we should be doing.

The bottom line is, instead of actually putting more oil on the market to lower the price, we are increasing the reserve as we speak, raising the price even further, even though the reserve is over 90 percent full.

I have a resolution I hope to introduce on some bill soon enough that asks the President to confront OPEC, not to play footsie with them, not to just tell the Saudis we understand.

I understand there has been a close relationship between many in this administration and the Saudis and the oil companies. It is sort of a Bermuda Triangle into which oil prices just go. But enough is enough. We should be putting a million barrels of oil out into the market for 30 or 60 days and watch, the price will come down.

I don't regard this as a partisan activity. I pushed President Clinton to do this for 8 months. He did it in October of 2002. The price went down and stayed

down. Do you know why it stayed down? Not just the new oil on the market, although oil prices are decided at the margin, but because OPEC knew they couldn't play around with us. When Spence Abraham, the Secretary of Energy, says we are not using the SPR, it gives a green light to OPEC that says: Raise prices as high as you want.

Is that leadership? Is that what the average American needs? Again, the average American is not looking at the newspaper and saying: Gee, the economy is great. They are sitting down at the dinner table Friday night and tearing out their hair about how they are going to pay their bills. The high price of gasoline makes it much worse. We have a way to combat it, to tell the Saudis and OPEC, the heck with you. And we are sitting there. This administration just sits and twiddles its thumbs as the price goes up and up and up. In fact, we send them little signals that it is perfectly OK.

The resolution I will be drafting—and I know my colleagues from California and Oregon are interested because we have talked about this—asks that we immediately, for 30 days, and then with the option for another 30 days, put a million barrels of oil out there. The price will come down.

I ask my fellow New Yorkers and Americans, don't think there is nothing we can do about high oil prices. As my good colleague from Oregon who led this debate said and as my colleague from New Jersey said, if we would simply use the SPR to reduce prices instead of now having it raise prices, the price would come down.

Again, our job as Senator is not to just look at these macrostatistics—that is part of the job—it is to figure out what the average family needs. And they need lower prices.

We can do it. I urge the administration, I urge this body to stop ignoring this problem, to get working on this problem, and bring those prices down in a variety of ways. What I have been pushing is the SPR, release some oil from the SPR. Prices will come down. It happened when President Clinton did it.

I hope this body will act quickly. Just because there is big oil, because there are Saudis, does not mean we should have to roll over. The President should be standing up for the average American, not standing up for the oil companies and not patting the Saudis on the back.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, how much time remains on the Democratic side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Four minutes 45 seconds.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I will use part or all of that time. I know Senator BREAUX was planning to come to the floor but has now changed his plans.

RESPONSE TO PRISONER ABUSE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I had hoped to come to the floor when Senator DURBIN spoke with regard to the need for a Senate response on the matter of prisoner abuse. Senator DURBIN related, as I understand it, some conversations I have had with the distinguished majority leader, and I confirm I have had some very good conversations with the majority leader about some of the actions Senator DURBIN outlined.

The majority leader shares my view, and I know he will want to speak to the matter himself, that the Senate needs to address this matter, asking Secretary Rumsfeld to come to room S-407 this week so we can ask questions directly and clarify why it was when they met with us last week we were not told of this information, and share with us as much as he and the Pentagon know about the degree of abuse, what other circumstances may be involved, and whatever has been learned so far through the investigation, and a full airing of the report.

He also indicated his view that the Secretary ought to come before the appropriate committees and testify with regard to these actions so the American people have a better understanding of what we know and what actions are being taken to address this circumstance so we can say without equivocation it will not happen again, and that we can reiterate to the world community this is not the practice, not the policy, and certainly not in keeping with the character of the American people.

Finally, Senator FRIST and I have talked extensively about the importance of passing a resolution this week denouncing this abuse and expressing our abhorrence on a bipartisan basis and sending as clear a message as we can to all the world community that this is unacceptable behavior, it is not in keeping with our practice, with our philosophy, with our character, and we want as much as possible to rectify what damage has been done and to assure those who would in some way make any effort to use this for their own purposes as an anti-American propaganda tool that that will not be tolerated.

This is not America. This is not the practice of our country. This is not the practice of 99.9 percent of the military serving so admirably in Iraq today. They deserve better than that. And to tarnish their reputation and the contributions they have made is abhorrent as well.

We need to make sure those points are made, but, first and foremost, we need to have a better understanding. We are shooting in the dark. We have no information other than what we have read in the newspaper, and that is not acceptable. Secretary Rumsfeld ought to be here, he ought to explain himself and the Pentagon, and we ought to say, after having acquired that information, as unequivocally and

with whatever authority we have, this will not happen again.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, before the distinguished minority leader departs, I join, as does the majority leader, in his request. As he may know, yesterday the Armed Services Committee had a 2-hour briefing with the top military leaders from the Department of the Army. Senator LEVIN and I felt it important to proceed very quickly. Following that, we had a press conference in which both Senator LEVIN and I spoke of the need for the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Rumsfeld, to come up.

I have been working on that steadily, and I can assure the leader, having talked to my leader last night, Senator FRIST—presumably shortly after the two leaders had discussed it—that Senator FRIST has joined with Senator DASCHLE and others to get that done.

I anticipate, however—and I think it is probably wise—that the President of the United States is going to address this issue, and I think immediately following that, I will presume, say, Thursday morning, tomorrow morning, that we could hope to have the Secretary before the Armed Services Committee. And then subject to the leadership, perhaps he could work with other Senators in another forum later sometime tomorrow. That would be my advice.

I commend the leader, my good friend, for his incorporation in his remarks the need for every Senator as they address this issue to reflect on the, as he said, 99.99 percent of extraordinary professionalism and courage rendered by the men and women in the Armed Forces, not just in Iraq, not just in Afghanistan, but all over the world. No one should have their wonderful works and sacrifices and those of their families in any way tarnished by these serious allegations.

I thank my good friend and leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, if I can respond, I thank the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee for his comments and for the work he has already undertaken to ensure many of these issues can be addressed. He has shown real leadership. I applaud that and look forward to working with him in the days ahead.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank my good friend and colleague of many years.

I should now like to proceed, if the Chair will kindly advise this Senator the amount of time under the control of this side of the aisle.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are 30 minutes in morning business under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

Mr. WARNER. I should like to take approximately 10 minutes of that time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

SUPPORT FOR OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, in my colloquy with the distinguished Democratic leader, I reviewed my great concern that as Senators—indeed, as people all over the United States and, indeed, the world—wish to address the extraordinary, tragic information flowing about alleged atrocities perpetrated by U.S. forces and perhaps others that they incorporate in every statement a reference to the courage, the sacrifice, of the men and women in the Armed Forces of our Nation, of the coalition forces who are fighting with us in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world, and, indeed, the impact of this tragic series of revelations on their families back here at home, and to be ever mindful that in the United States and in the homes of the coalition forces in other nations are the wives, the children, mothers, fathers, and others who are in strong support of their loved one beyond the shores, and how ever so hard this story hits home with them.

I do hope my colleagues and others, as they address this issue, take the time to include reference to the valiant work being done by uniformed people of the armed forces of many nations and their families.

The allegations of mistreatment of the prisoners by some members of the Armed Forces, if proven, represent an appalling and totally unacceptable breach of military regulations and conduct that could—and I repeat—could undermine much of the greatest works and sacrifices of our forces in Iraq and around the world in the war on terror.

The vast majority of our men and women—as the Democratic leader said, 99.99 percent—fully understand their obligations to conduct themselves in accordance with military, national, and international standards, most particularly the standards of professional conduct that are taught each soldier, sailor, airman, and marine of our forces.

The mistreatment of prisoners, no matter what their reason for incarceration, is not what the uniform of the United States stands for. It is not what the United States stands for as a Nation. It is not the way for anyone who wears that uniform to conduct themselves.

The Armed Services Committee received a briefing from senior Army officials yesterday. We did receive a considerable amount of information that is not freely in the press today. I think in due course that information will be and should be shared publicly. Nevertheless, we have begun our probe of this particular case. I commend the committee for its actions so far. We had three-quarters of the members of the committee in attendance yesterday. There was a very vigorous questioning of the Army witness. While informative, the briefing revealed the need for more extensive public hearings from civilian and military offi-

cials. I made a request for such hearings immediately following our hearing yesterday. I was joined by Senator LEVIN, the ranking member.

We must always remember that under our Constitution, it is very clear in the long traditions of this country that civilians control the U.S. military. They have the ultimate responsibility of the actions of the men and women in uniform. They are the ones who promulgate the orders from the Commander in Chief, the President, to the unit commanders. Consequently, the civilians must accept that responsibility.

Secretary Rumsfeld, in a press conference yesterday, addressed the Nation. As I said, I have been in consultation with him and his office about an appearance, which I anticipate will take place very shortly following the public statements to be issued, I believe, today by the President of the United States.

I fully believe the most constructive course of action at this point is to fully understand the extent of this problem, no matter how much time it requires to gather all of the facts, no matter how difficult it is to get all of those facts, no matter how embarrassing those facts may be—get the facts out and the story, so that not only the Congress of the United States can reach its judgment but, indeed, the American public and others around the world, because this is an around-the-world story at this point in time.

Our great Nation has had a symbol of freedom and hope for its entire existence. The world looks to us as the standard bearer of how best to bring about freedom for others, how best to protect those values which we hold so dearly and for which men and women have gone forth for generations from these shores not to conquer or take land, but they have gone forth in the cause of freedom.

I believe in due course, once this story is fully understood, we will have the ability as a Nation to apologize to our Chief Executive, the President, through others, through this humble Senator, for the actions taken and, most importantly, give the assurances to the world that we will not ever again see a repeat.

I have had the privilege to have had association with the men and women of uniform for over 50 years. When I was a young sailor in the closing year of World War II, I began my career in the training commands of the U.S. Navy. I have had many opportunities in the ensuing years to work with the men and women of the U.S. military. During the war in Korea, I served as a marine. During the Vietnam war, I was privileged to serve over 5 years as the Navy Secretary. We had our problems during that conflict, but I doubt if any of those problems parallel the seriousness and consequences of this framework of allegations today.

Therefore, it is a duty upon us to leave no stone unturned, to reveal all