

further along that road to having a long, established peace as we look to the future.

It has not been an easy mission. Senator Danforth, in spite of it not being an easy mission, has made huge progress. We are much closer to ending that terrible conflict of the civil war that has been ongoing now for over two decades than we were before Senator Danforth became involved.

On June 11, the United Nations Security Council endorsed the peace process and committed to taking those steps outlined to assist the parties in implementing a final comprehensive peace package once the agreement itself is reached, and that is real progress.

During my trips to Sudan, I had the opportunity to not go as a U.S. Senator—in fact, I have never been in the country as an official U.S. Senator—but as part of a medical mission group where I have had the opportunity to interact with the Sudanese people from many different tribes in the south of Sudan.

I have had the opportunity and the blessing—blessing for me because of the understanding it gives me—to have treated patients with war injuries. In fact, even in late August, early September of this year, I treated a patient who suffered a gunshot wound to the upper part of his leg. I treated that injury. And the time before that, I treated a patient who stepped on a landmine. There are still landmines throughout southern Sudan. We are making real progress on that issue.

But today, as the Sudan works toward a settlement, with the progress that has been made, we face a growing humanitarian emergency that was not thought about a year ago at all, and even today we are struggling to put the spotlight on and the purpose on—and it is not entirely a separate issue, but it is a separate issue from the traditional thought about civil war: north versus south, black versus white, or Muslim versus Christian, all the ways people have thought about a civil war in the past. This crisis is a relatively new one. It is the direct result of the actions taken by the government in Khartoum and their proxies, the government-supported militias against the Fur, Zaghawa, and the Masaalit peoples of Darfur. Members of this body have spoken to this issue over the last several days. We need to speak a lot more about this crisis.

Government-sponsored militias systematically attack African Muslim villages but leave Arab Muslim villages untouched. Government planes—and these planes are Antinov planes. I do not know how many there are, but they are government-sponsored, government-owned planes that historically have bombed indiscriminately in the south. In fact, they have bombed the very church and hospital in southern Sudan where I go each year.

These same planes seem to be bombing indiscriminately in this Darfur region, and these are government-owned

planes. Crops are burned and wells are being poisoned, irrigation systems destroyed, houses are burned, and then the earth is left scorched and barren, and the population is being decimated.

There is an estimated population of about 6.5 million people in Sudan, and as many as 2.2 million people have been directly affected by this crisis. More than 1 million people have become displaced.

That is such a dry word. What does “displaced” mean? It means they had a home, and they had to leave that home and struggle to make their way in other regions, not having their occupation, their job, their land they tilled before. This is 1 million people.

Mr. President, 158,000 people have fled to neighboring Chad, and more than 30,000 have lost their lives.

The World Health Organization recently reported an alarming reemergence of polio in Darfur, a disease that has not been seen in years. Should polio get a foothold there this autumn, the polio high season will see thousands of children who could be struck, and that means struck with paralysis or even worse.

At this point in time, we need to make sure—and it is our responsibility—that Khartoum understands there cannot be peace in the south at the same time they have an ongoing war—many people have used the word “genocide”—in the west, which is where the Darfur region is. War anywhere in Sudan will lead to war everywhere.

Khartoum agreed to a cease-fire on April 11. The cease-fire was renewed on May 22. This agreement committed Khartoum to disbanding the Jingaweit militias.

The agreement included a protocol binding Khartoum to allow humanitarian access. Jingaweit militias continue to ravage the countryside while aid workers are turned away. Until we get aid workers in to deliver aid, to shine the spotlight, to report back on the travesty, I see no end to this problem, and that is where the international community must step up.

Khartoum claims to have lifted travel restrictions but, at the same time, Khartoum still places obstacles to the delivery of aid. That aid, I am convinced, will flow if those channels are opened.

Khartoum places difficulties on obtaining visas for relief personnel. Khartoum restricts the movement of relief workers within Darfur. Khartoum places obstacles to clearing relief supplies through customs. Khartoum interferes with relief workers seeking to protect civilians from harm.

Khartoum's actions simply cannot be tolerated. Khartoum's actions will not be tolerated. The United States must respond. The world community must respond. We should continue to pressure Khartoum to see that the government will find itself increasingly isolated in the world community if it continues to block the delivery of aid and

relief, and that is food and health care supplies.

This administration has been working tirelessly over the last year to deliver aid to those in dire need in Darfur. Two more relief flights landed in Nyala last Saturday and Sunday, and a third flight was scheduled to land yesterday.

Since February of last year, USAID has done other things. It has dispatched plastic sheeting to build shelters for more than 160,000 people. It has provided 117,000 blankets, 2 water purification systems. The administration has provided 87,000 metric tons of food. The administration has devoted considerable resources and committed a great deal of political capital to assisting the southern Sudanese.

President Bush has played an active role in the peace process. We have engaged the United Nations and will continue to do so, to pressure Khartoum into ending its support for the militias in Darfur, to assist in the delivery of aid, and to rally the international community to come to Sudan's assistance. It is our responsibility. We must do it.

In closing, I do commend Senator Danforth for all of his work to help the people of Sudan. It has been tireless. It has been bold. He has done a superb job in the Senate and in all of his years of public service, especially in Sudan. I am delighted he has accepted and that we have approved his position at the United Nations. He is a great friend to us in the Senate and a great friend to the United States of America.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I am happy that the two leaders are in the Chamber because I wish to make an announcement to the Senate.

Previously, I had stated I did not think it would be possible for me to make the commitment that when the Defense appropriations bill goes to conference this year it would not come back with the provisions in the House-passed bill pertaining to the debt ceiling. I have had a series of conversations through the evening last night and this morning and I now believe I can commit that when we come back from this conference we will not bring back a bill that contains the provisions that were in the House-passed bill pertaining to the debt ceiling issues that we must face sometime this year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I compliment the distinguished chairman of

the Appropriations Committee for his statement and for the assurances that he is now prepared to give the Senate. He more than anyone—and I want to acknowledge as well our ranking member of the Appropriations Committee and the subcommittee for their extraordinary efforts to move this appropriations process along. They, more than anybody, understand how critical it is that we move these appropriations bills forward. The debt limit would have been extremely counterproductive and would have prevented us from completing our work.

With the assurances given by the manager and our chairman, I am prepared to commit to him that we will do all we can to finish our work on this bill today. I believe we can finish it today. I would anticipate some amendments, but there is no reason why, given what he has just committed in terms of the conference, that we cannot finish this today and look forward to other bills as soon as we come back after the Fourth of July recess.

I thank him for that commitment and pledge my support and partnership in working with him and our ranking member today to complete our work on time.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, does the Senator from West Virginia wish to be recognized? I will be happy to yield to him.

Mr. BYRD. Yes. I thank the distinguished chairman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. First of all, he is my friend and nothing as far as I am concerned will ever mar that friendship, but I have to say that my blood boiled last Monday evening when I learned that the House Republican leadership, with the support of Senate Republican leaders, I believe, had decided to put a placeholder amendment into the Defense appropriations bill that could be used in conference to increase the \$7.4 trillion statutory debt limit perhaps to a level of \$8.1 trillion, the level needed for 2005. That placeholder language meant that the House and the Senate conferees would be free to slip in language to increase the statutory debt limit by an untold amount, maybe \$690 billion, maybe more, without either body of Congress ever having to vote in public on the matter.

This is a tough vote. I can understand how the Republican leadership in the House, the Senate, and downtown, the White House, would like to see that limit slipped into this bill in conference.

Again, the chairman of this committee has steadfastly shown great knowledge and great determination in his efforts to bring forth to the Senate for its consideration all 13 appropriations bills. That has been tough for him. I thank him for his commitment with respect to the Defense appropriations bill and the conference report which will be coming along. I thank him for that. He is a legislator in the true sense of the word.

Also, in 2002, when I was chairman of the Appropriations Committee, the House Republican leaders tried this same trick on the fiscal year 2002 supplemental appropriations bill. I refused. I steadfastly refused to include such language in the conference report. Instead, the Senate took up, debated, and passed a freestanding bill to increase the debt limit. The House then voted to approve the measure with a one-vote margin. That is the responsible way to increase the debt limit. We owe this to the American public. We should not cloak the debt increase in the camouflage uniform of a Defense appropriations bill.

So I thank Senator FRIST and Senator STEVENS for making a commitment today that the Defense appropriations conference report will not include an increase in the statutory debt limit. The Senate should vote on this issue on a freestanding bill.

I would like to ask the distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee—I had hoped the leader would be here so I could ask him—is he making a commitment and is the leader making a commitment that when the Senate considers the debt limit increase it will be on a freestanding bill and that it will not come to the Senate on any other appropriations conference report or in any other unrelated conference report? Can the committee chairman make that commitment?

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, who has the floor?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina). The Senator from West Virginia has the floor.

Mr. STEVENS. I will be back to answer that when I get the floor.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I will respond to my friend from West Virginia by saying the so-called Gephardt rule is not within the control of this Senator, nor the leaders. If the House chooses to take up the Gephardt rule and use it as it was used several times before, including, I believe, by Senator Mitchell when he was the leader, then that will be an issue that others will have to pursue. I am not in a position to make that commitment, and I do not think the leader is in a position to make that commitment.

I do want to proceed with the bill and I would hope my friend would accept that as being the position we are in now. I am in the position to make the commitment I have made with regard to this bill. I hope we can proceed on this bill.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2005

Mr. STEVENS. I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 594, H.R. 4613, the Defense Appropriations Committee bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina). Is there objection?

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I shall not unduly delay the distinguished chairman, let me also thank our ranking member of that subcommittee, Mr. INOUE. I thank again Senator STEVENS. He has been a great chairman of that committee, and he has always been fair with me. So once this bill is brought up before the Senate—and it will be up before the Senate very soon, within the next few minutes—I shall do everything I can to help to get action on this bill today.

But let me say to the Senate and to the Senate leaders and to the Republican leaders in the House, this matter of extending and increasing the debt limit is a matter which should be brought before the American people. It should be debated; it should be voted upon. I shall do my best to see to it, if it is on any appropriations bill or any other bill, that we get a freestanding vote, and we are going to try to debate this issue. The American people are entitled to hear the debate on this bill.

When I came to the Congress almost 52 years ago, they did not sneak the debt limit into an appropriations bill as the attempt might have been made here but for the good judgment of Senator STEVENS and Senator FRIST. They didn't sneak it into the bill. The Republicans controlled the House when I first came to the House of Representatives. They didn't do a thing like that. They laid everything on the table and they debated it. I hope we will get back to that point of debating the debt limit so the House Republicans will not be let off the hook. They have a responsibility to the American people to lay it on the table and to debate it.

I thank the distinguished Senator from Alaska, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, for yielding to me. I do not object. I remove my reservation.

Mr. STEVENS. I thank the Senator and renew my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4613) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes.

Mr. STEVENS. I ask unanimous consent all after the enacting clause be stricken, the text of Calendar No. 593, S. 2559, the Senate committee-reported bill, be inserted in the RECORD in lieu thereof, and that bill, as amended, be considered as original text for the purpose of further amendment, provided no points of order be waived by reason of this agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I just filed this report. It is the report that