

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now return to legislative session.

The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, does the Senator from Kentucky want to be recognized?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes. If I could get in the queue here, I know the Senator from West Virginia is going to speak, followed by the Senator from North Carolina.

I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized after the Senator from North Carolina.

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I voted against the Frist-Daschle resolution on the Middle East. My constituents are entitled to an explanation. I opposed the resolution, and I know the leaders, and indeed all of the Members of this body, are genuinely committed to advancing the cause of peace in the Middle East, but no one should be naive enough to think this resolution will move the process forward one centimeter. If anything, the lopsided pro-Israel slant of this resolution will serve only to strengthen the growing distrust of moderate Arab States toward the United States.

This resolution is a blatantly unfair reading of the current status of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. It claims that the President's roadmap for peace is still relevant, even though it has been completely stalled for more than a year. The resolution wholeheartedly endorses Prime Minister Sharon's view of the barrier wall being built in West Bank, without so much as a mention of the wide opposition to its construction from moderate Arab countries, such as Jordan.

The resolution contains language that could easily be construed to be in support of the controversial, and some claim illegal, practice of the targeted assassinations carried out by the Israeli Armed Forces. The United States is completely right to condemn the violence carried out by Palestinian terrorists, but we cannot turn a blind eye to the unwarranted excesses of the Israeli Government under Mr. Sharon. If our country truly wants to push both sides toward the negotiating table, we should condemn all violence arising from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including that which has claimed the lives of innocent Palestinians. There is blame to be shouldered by both sides. If we are to regain our credibility—let me say that again. If we are to regain our credibility as honest brokers in the Middle East, we need to acknowledge that fact. Progress will only be made in resolving the Middle East violence when the United States weighs in with a fair, evenhanded position that points out the wrongdoings of both sides.

Resolutions such as this one are a far cry from being fair, objective, or evenhanded.

Besides the specific provisions of this resolution, I oppose the thrust of the resolution, which is intended to express "the Sense of the Congress in Support of United States Policy for a Middle East Peace Process." The United States has been completely disengaged from the Israeli-Palestinian peace process for far too long, and the number of victims on both sides is growing far too fast. I cannot support a policy that boils down to a benign neglect of the violence in the Middle East.

Resolutions such as the one the Senate has taken up today may serve as a useful platform for a press release or a stump speech, but they do nothing to advance the cause of peace in the Middle East. I would jump at the chance to vote for a meaningful resolution that articulated the Senate's support of a viable policy to resolve the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. But this administration has abandoned any pretense of promoting such a policy. To voice the Senate's support for what amounts to a set of empty promises and incendiary rhetoric is a foolish exercise of which I want no part.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

IRAQ AND AL-QAIDA

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, I find it troubling that the war in Iraq is not being equated to the overall war on terror. Polls have shown evidence that Americans are not making the connection. So the question at hand is, Was removing Saddam's government a positive step in the overall war on terror?

Our ability to turn over control to a peaceful and sovereign Iraqi government is an integral part of the overall war on terror. Collaboration of Iraq's former regime with terrorist groups and its funding of them have not been in question. Yet few critics and naysayers have passed up the chance to undermine a link between Iraq and al-Qaida.

Despite recent media reports that have clouded, or even misrepresented, the facts, there is compelling evidence that al-Qaida and Iraq have been linked for more than a decade. Democratic co-chairman of the 9/11 Commission, former Representative Lee Hamilton of Indiana, told reporters there were connections between al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein's government.

In a speech earlier this afternoon, former Vice President Al Gore accused President Bush of lying about a connection between al-Qaida and Iraq. This is the same Al Gore who was a member of the same Clinton White House that first made charges about the dangers of Iraq passing chemical or biological weapons to al-Qaida. Those charges formed the basis for the missile strikes against alleged terrorist targets in Sudan in August 1998, ac-

cording to on-the-record statements from no fewer than six top Clinton administration officials.

Documents discovered recently by U.S. forces at Saddam's hometown of Tikrit showed that Iraq gave Abdul Rahman Yasin both a home and a salary. Yasin was a member of the al-Qaida cell that detonated the 1993 World Trade Center bomb. Is this not a clear example of Iraq not only having a relationship with al-Qaida but also harboring and rewarding a terrorist, a person who was directly involved in a terrorist attack on our soil?

Let me highlight the case of Zarqawi, arguably the most dangerous terrorist in the world today. He and his men trained and fought with al-Qaida for years. Zarqawi's network helped establish and operate an explosives and poison facility in northeast Iraq. Not only was Zarqawi in Baghdad prior to Saddam's ousting, but nearly two dozen members of al-Qaida were there as well. One al-Qaida associate even described the situation in Iraq as good and stated that Baghdad could be transited quickly.

Let me be clear. Mistakes have been made in Iraq, and this operation has been far from perfect, as evidenced by the fact that Zarqawi and other terrorists continue to wreak havoc throughout Iraq. But those who undermine the rationale for our mission in Iraq for political gain make our mission even more difficult and certainly do not boost the morale of our men and women in uniform.

Many of these young men and women are from my home State of North Carolina. They seek to assist the Iraqi people in transforming a country that harbored and gave safe haven to terrorists, a country to which terrorists traveled to consort with one another about how to produce weapons and how to inflict them on a common enemy. The terrorists know what is at stake, which is why they are pulling out all the stops to derail our efforts. They understand that a free and democratic Iraq is a serious blow to their interests.

I want our men and women in uniform to know that this Senator understands and appreciates the importance and the magnitude of the great work they are doing in Iraq. As my colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN, stated very succinctly this morning, the war in Iraq is the central battleground in the war on terror. Because of the efforts and eventual success of many brave men and women, the American people and the world are much safer.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

RENEWAL OF SANCTIONS AGAINST BURMA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, a few moments ago, the Senate voted to renew sanctions against one of the worst regimes in the world, the regime

that runs Burma. The situation in Burma is dire. Suu Kyi and the other NLD prodemocracy leaders remain in prison; a crackdown on democracy activists continues; and the SPDC's—that is the name the military thugs who run the country have given themselves—inhumane policies of child and forced labor, rape as a weapon of war, narcotics, human trafficking, and the use of child soldiers remains unchanged.

The swift passage of this resolution, which we did a few moments ago, matches words of support for freedom in Burma with concrete actions. It is past time to judge the military regime in Burma not by what it says but by what it does. The junta misled governments throughout the region into thinking that the May 17 constitutional convention would be a step forward in the reconciliation process, but it was not. The convention was nothing more than a summer camp for the sycophants of the military regime.

I am pleased our allies are increasing pressure on the junta. The European Union recently cancelled the Asia-Europe meeting because of Burma. It is an important step in the right direction. The EU should consider additional sanctions against the military regime.

More must be done. The U.N. Security Council should take up Burma for a discussion and for sanction and ASEAN should abandon the outdated policy of noninterference in member states' affairs.

One common subject must remain and that is the full and unfettered participation of Suu Kyi and the NLD, her political party, and ethnic minorities in a meaningful reconciliation process. I have two words for the regional neighbors of Burma: ASEAN 2006. That is the year Burma takes over chairmanship. That is 2 short years from now, which would result in a tremendous loss of face for that association.

Despite their worst efforts over the past 14 years, the SPDC has failed to smother the flames of freedom in Burma. I continue to be inspired by reports of activists who bravely and non-violently defy the junta's illegitimate rule, like the handful arrested last month for distributing pamphlets in several Burmese townships marking the 1-year anniversary of the Depayin massacre.

It would be wise for the SPDC to accept the time-tested fact that Suu Kyi and the NLD are not going anywhere. They, and the ethnic minorities, are an integral part of the solution to the Burmese problem.

To wit, the NLD and their supporters made the courageous and correct decision to boycott the sham SPDC-orchestrated constitutional convention last month. I am pleased that international condemnation by the United States, United Nations, European Union and regional neighbors of the hollow convention was rightly aimed at the SPDC. The generals in Rangoon made

any number of assurances to foreign diplomats that the process would be inclusive. It clearly was not.

This only underscores the imperative to judge the SPDC not by what it says but by what it does.

The convention turned out to be nothing more than a summer camp for SPDC sycophants. According to the Washington Times, the junta required their handpicked delegates to "bathe at reasonable times, avoid junk food and live in self-contained camps where they can enjoy karaoke, movies and golf."

Import sanctions by the United States alone will not help facilitate a meaningful reconciliation process in Burma. We need the U.N., E.U., and regional neighbors to fully commit to the cause. This was made clear by the NLD in a recent plea to U.N. General-Secretary Kofi Annan to "take this matter to the Security Council".

The U.N. should help the NLD and the people of Burma by examining the clear and present danger Burma poses to the region. This must include narcotics production and trafficking, the spread of HIV/AIDS throughout the region, the gross human rights violations of the SPDC, the plight of Burmese refugees and IDPs, and alarming reports of the junta's interests in North Korean missiles and Russian nuclear technology.

The E.U. should help the NLD and the Burmese people by examining its sanctions regime and imposing further punitive measures against the junta. I am pleased that our allies in the E.U. recently canceled the upcoming Asia-Europe Meeting, ASEM, dialogue in Brussels over the attendance of the SPDC. The junta has no place at this multilateral table.

Regional neighbors should help the Burmese people by reconsidering the Association of Southeast Asian Nation's, ASEAN, outdated policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of member states.

Asian leaders must recognize the regime for what it is, wholly illegitimate to the people of Burma, the international community and the region. The SPDC's export of illicit drugs and HIV/AIDS is, literally, burying the children of Asia. All of Asia's youth, not only those in Burma, face a future that is undermined by Burmese-spread drugs and disease.

The region cannot ignore the fact of the junta's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2006. There could be no greater loss of face for that association than being under the guidance of the SPDC.

Let me close by thanking all 53 of my colleagues who joined me in sponsoring the sanctions resolution. I want to recognize in particular the efforts of Senators FEINSTEIN and MCCAIN and their respective staffs to support freedom and justice in Burma. The Burmese people have no greater friends in the Senate, or in Washington. I also appreciate the efforts by Senators GRASSLEY and BAUCUS and their respective staffs

to expedite consideration of the legislation.

I would be remiss if I did not note the words of support of the NLD made by former Mongolian Prime Minister Tashika Elbegdorj, the Same Rainsy Party in Cambodia, and the cross-party Burma Caucus formed by Malaysian parliamentarians. Although they are engaged in their own efforts, and, in some cases, struggles, for democracy and human rights in their respective countries, they stand in solidarity with the people of Burma.

I encourage other neighbors to find their voice in support of the Suu Kyi and the NLD during these troubling times.

I thank the 53 cosponsors of this resolution, in particular Senators FEINSTEIN and MCCAIN. Burma has no better friends in Washington than DIANNE FEINSTEIN and JOHN MCCAIN.

I also appreciate the efforts of Senators GRASSLEY and BAUCUS and their respective staffs to move the bill in an expeditious manner.

I ask unanimous consent that a letter from Secretary of State Colin Powell indicating the State Department's support for the continuation of the sanctions we earlier today imposed with our vote in the Senate be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington, DC, April 30, 2004.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations,
Committee on Appropriations,
United States Senate.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am writing to reaffirm the State Department's support for the continuation of the restrictions on imports from Burma, as I stated in my testimony before the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations on April 8. Our sanctions represent a clear and powerful expression of American disapproval of the developments in Burma. This action is a key component of our policy in bringing democracy and improved human rights to Burma, as well as supporting the morale of Burmese democracy activists.

I support wholeheartedly passage of the Joint Resolution you introduced along with Senator Feinstein. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

COLIN L. POWELL.

THERE IS A PRICE TO PAY FOR FREEDOM'S STRUGGLE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, almost a century and a half ago, the abolitionist Frederick Douglass spoke:

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle . . .

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning.

They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

We could find no wiser counsel as we approach the historic transitioning of