

Louisiana, believes that even if Ivan bypasses the region, its scary approach could help galvanize support for a more comprehensive fix.

"We're running out of tomorrows," Davis said. "God willing, if there's still a southern Louisiana next week, I'm not talking about the politics of the possible anymore. It's now a question of which side are you on: Do you support the obliteration of a region, or do you want to try to save it?"

On Tuesday, though, most local officials were thinking more about the potential danger than the potential opportunity. If Ivan does pound New Orleans tidal surges could leave the city underwater for months, since its pumps can remove only about an inch every hour, creating a "toxic soup" of chemicals, rodents, poisons and snakes.

The local officials said they could not order a mandatory evacuation in a city as poor as New Orleans in which more than 100,000 residents have no cars, but they urged people to find some way to escape. "If you want to take a chance buy a lottery ticket," said Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard. "Don't take a chance on this hurricane."

New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin seemed flustered as he pleaded with his constituents to flee, at one point suggesting that they take shelter in area hospitals. Visitors were also urged to find somewhere else to go—including 10,000 conventioners in town for the annual meeting of the National Safety Council.

"This is not a drill," Nagin said. "This is the real deal."

But the logistics of exit are quite formidable in the Big Easy. In 1998, as more than 300,000 people fled Hurricane Georges, Interstate 10 turned into a parking lot. Similar miles-long snarls unfolded Tuesday. Flights were canceled and the airport prepared to close. The town that gave the world "A Streetcar Named Desire" idled its streetcars.

The underlying problem, Maestri said, is that the city never should have been built in the first place. It is a terrific location for business but a lousy location for safety.

"The Chamber of Commerce gets really mad at me when I say this, but does New Orleans get rebuilt?" Maestri asked. The answer, he said could very well be no.

I thank the Chair for the time and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

LACK OF DIRECTION

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I rise to voice deep concern about what is happening in our war with Iraq, what is happening within our country, and a lack of direction that is pronounced as far as I am concerned.

We hear the political debate that goes on: What is your plan for getting us out of Iraq? Well, what is yours?

Since our Commander in Chief is in charge, I would think that he would lead the country and lead the direction of the campaign, telling the American people about when it is we are going to be able to expect our troops to come home, when these families will be reunited.

Last week, the 33rd soldier from New Jersey died in Iraq. Our country has now lost a total of 1,018 of our troops in Iraq. Of these deaths, 877 troops have died since the President announced that major combat operations in Iraq were over, finished. He made that announcement during a political appearance on an aircraft carrier on May 1, 2003.

If we look at this picture, we see our sailors lined up. I know what they are thinking. I was a veteran, and I remember so vividly when I was on a ship bound for Japan after serving in Europe and the war suddenly ended and how relieved I was. I was concerned for myself, of course, but I was concerned for my brothers and sisters in arms as well. So these sailors are standing at attention, and there were rousing cheers when the President made his statement. And he boldly declared: "Mission accomplished."

It turned out to be more theater than reality. The mission accomplished debacle is illustrative of President Bush's failure to execute a coherent plan to win the war in Iraq. Even after reaching a thousand dead, President Bush has not come forward with a plan. We have not heard one word about when those troops are expected to come home. When will the fighting really stop? When can we look at the situation in Iraq and say, good grief, it is finally resolved? Every day more and more people are killed, and many are Americans. But lots of times the structure in Iraq promotes this kind of dispute and violence.

I say to President Bush, stop this killing. Our troops are putting their lives on the line for our country.

The President refuses to show the kind of leadership we need to have in a time of war. Even as the fighting continues, we hear promises that somehow or other it is going to get better, when in fact the situation has worsened.

I ask my colleagues: What are we doing there? What is our plan? What kind of a government do we think we are going to see there? We have sort of turned it over to the Iraqis, but since that turnover has been made the violence and the numbers killed each day has accelerated. I don't know whether anyone here knows what, if any, our plans are. As the killing continues overseas, the President is inviting a new risk to begin here at home.

Madam President, this Senate, the Congress, failed to extend the life of the assault weapons ban. Ultimately, the failure to extend this law falls on the desk of President Bush. He has not done anything—not lifted a finger—to urge the Republican leaders to extend this ban. As a matter of fact, in earlier days, he said he would sign a bill. But he knows very well, and all America knows very well, if he doesn't encourage the Republican leadership to present a bill, there is no bill to sign. So all kinds of boastful comments can be made about how he would sign it, but to my knowledge he never has

picked up the phone and called the leadership of the House or Senate and said we need a bill, we don't want these crazy weapons around our country.

Assault weapons are semiautomatic, civilian versions of weapons designed for military use. They are the weapons of choice of criminals and terrorists because they are capable of holding large-capacity magazines that allow a shooter to fire up to 150 shots without having to reload.

These weapons are specifically designed for military use in order to kill greater numbers of people more effectively and quickly.

This placard illustrates some of the new products available at local gun stores, thanks to the President's lack of leadership. We took an action here that said we would like to continue the ban, but it fell when the House refused to deal with it.

We could not find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and we are finding weapons that easily destroy lives right here at home. FBI statistics show that one in five law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty were killed by an assault weapon. That is why police officers across the country are outraged that we did not extend this ban. Why in the world we need these weapons, I cannot figure out. Who do we please when we say let's have these automatic weapons on our streets in New York? For what purpose? Target shooting? Shooting deer? Maybe shooting neighbors. Maybe drug dealers, yes. Maybe policemen. That is who gets shot when these guns are available.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Fraternal Order of Police, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Major County Sheriffs Association—every one of them want us to extend the assault weapons ban. But our ears were closed.

Madam President, these law enforcement officers put their lives on the line every day, and they should not have to face criminals armed with an Uzi pistol or an AK-47 rifle, a Street Sweeper, or a TEC-9 pistol during a drug bust or school shooting. This Nation should never forget the school shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, where two teenage students, using a TEC-DC9 assault pistol and other weapons, went on a shooting rampage that killed 12 other students and a teacher. Who can ever forget the pictures of the students hanging out the windows begging for mercy, begging for a way to escape the rampage that was taking place?

We should never forget it. But we don't want to do anything about it; that is the tragedy. Nor should the Nation forget another school shooting in Stockton, CA, in 1989, where an AK-47 was used in a schoolyard full of kids, firing over 100 rounds in less than 2 minutes and killing 5 children and wounding 29 others.

Then there is the issue of terrorism. If anyone thinks for a second that the

expiration of the assault weapons ban will not be noticed by foreign terrorists, then we are hiding our heads in the sand.

Found in the rubble of a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan was a manual. It is entitled, "How Can I Train Myself for Jihad?"

The placard contains a quote from that manual:

In other countries, e.g., some states of the USA, South Africa, it is perfectly legal for members of the public to own certain types of firearms. If you live in such a country, obtain an assault rifle legally, preferably AK-47 or variations, learn how to use it properly and go and practice in the areas allowed for such training.

That is training on how to kill innocent people.

This placard also says:

"How Can I Train Myself for Jihad," a guide originally published on the Azzam.com, a website dedicated to the worldwide jihad (now shut down). The guide was found in the ruins of a terrorist training center south of Kabul, Afghanistan, after it was destroyed by U.S. air strikes in late 2001.

Those are the people who want to get their hands on these weapons. Those are the people who say that the United States is easy pickings if you want to buy a gun and kill a lot of people.

Terrorists know, they are aware of our weak gun laws. It just became weaker. For all of President Bush's statements on terrorism, he has chosen to stand with the NRA rather than protecting our communities from this brand of terror.

In my view, the President's behavior on the assault weapons ban is one of those things we call a flip-flop. It is when you say one thing and do something else. We saw an angry U.S. Senator on the floor of the convention a couple of weeks ago when he said that the worst thing to do is say something and do nothing. That is his definition of a flip-flop.

This is a flip-flop of the worst order. It endangers our families, our children, and our Nation's law enforcement officers. I wish it were not so, and apparently there is not going to be any going back on the assault weapons ban. I wish there were a way to resurrect it. We are where we are. What we have done is we have encouraged the sale of these weapons. I heard there are gun manufacturers who were preparing for a burst of sales activity when these weapons were available. I ask myself: Who wants to buy these kinds of weapons? What are they going to do with them? They are going to endanger our families and our kids and other innocents. That is what they are going to do.

It is too bad because we are now in the midst of a terrible situation with the war, with the casualties continuing to escalate, and with a situation totally out of control in Iraq. I was there shortly before the government was turned over to an interim group to be followed by an election in January. The fact is that it does not look like there is going to be an election in Jan-

uary. I heard statements from those in leadership in Iraq who suggest an election might be tough to hold. But one thing is for sure, this is not a mission accomplished. This is a mission that is still underway, and the cost is terrible.

I went to visit some wounded from Iraq at Walter Reed a few weeks ago, after a burial at Arlington Cemetery, to meet young people who will never function the way they used to. There was a man who was blinded from an attack who said to me: I will never see my 28-month-old daughter, but I still want to hold her.

That is the condition that continues to develop each and every day: Over 1,000 killed, many more thousands wounded, and we just hope and pray they will recover and we will be able to conclude this effort in Iraq successfully but quickly.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGEL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I might proceed as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

LEGITIMACY OF NEWS STORIES

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, if I might reminisce for a moment as a predicate for what I am about to say. I go back to a time in my career when I was the center of considerable national press attention. The occasion was the 1970s. The issue was Watergate. I will not bother to describe why I was there; I will just tell my colleagues of a phone call I received one night just before the "Evening News with Walter Cronkite" came on CBS.

A reporter called me to say that Dan Rather was going to be speaking about me that night, and he read to me the piece that had been written for Dan Rather to give on the evening news. Frankly, it terrified me because if it had been delivered in just the way it was read to me on the phone, it would have destroyed my business, destroyed my career, made it impossible for me to continue to represent the various clients I had in my public relations and consulting firm.

I said that to the reporter. I said: This is terrible, it is not true, and you will destroy my career. We had a brief conversation about the details of what it is he had in his report, and he said, well, I see your point, I will do the best I can, and hung up at about 10 minutes before the news broadcast was to begin.

As anyone can understand, I watched the news with great interest that night, and Walter Cronkite began by

saying: Tonight, Dan Rather has important new information about the Watergate scandal that he will be bringing us from Washington. It was about 20 minutes after the hour when he got around to Rather, and Dan Rather then gave a report, mentioned me by name but said the things that I had said to the reporter, along with some of the things he had already prepared. It was not a pleasant experience for me, but it was nowhere near what it sounded as if it would be some half hour before.

Within 10 minutes after the news broadcast ended, the phone rang again at my home, and it was Dan Rather. I thanked him for paying attention to the points I was trying to make, and he said: Well, you had a strong advocate, referring to the reporter who had been talking to me. Then he said: I have been in this town long enough to know the difference between a legitimate news story that has somehow come out and a situation that is being laid on me for the purpose of getting the information forward. He said: Mr. BENNETT, this was not a legitimate news story. This is something that was laid on me by someone who obviously wishes you ill. Who do you think your enemies might be in this situation?

We then had that discussion. That is neither here nor there, but obviously I always will remember that time. We do remember the times in our lives when trauma comes upon us. I remembered it fondly, with respect for Dan Rather and his willingness to listen to something other than the preconception that had been handed to him, and for his journalistic instinct to tell him that this just might not be a legitimate story, this just might be something that someone was feeding to him for a purpose and a hidden agenda.

We now know about the great controversy that has surrounded the documents that have come forward with respect to President Bush's service in the Texas National Guard. I regret, from my personal experience, to find that this newsman whom I have respected all these years is in the center of this particular controversy. It would seem to me that this time, Dan Rather's instinct has failed him. The instinct that told him some 30 years ago, again in his words, that "something was being laid on him" deserted him this time. It is very clear that documents were forged, they were laid on him, and this time he bit.

I do not join in the chorus that is arising on talk radio and elsewhere that he must somehow be driven from the air. I don't think he deserves that. But I do think this is a cautionary tale and we need to spend a little time talking about it because it represents a new phenomenon in the information age where someone has used information-age technology to forge documents and then insert those forged documents and the false information they contain into the political debate at a time that is crucial.

This is the first indication I know of where we have seen that sort of thing,