

will be an opportunity for the Iraqi people to experience some measure of catharsis and closure on a dark and terrible chapter in their history.

I commend them for their courage to restrain the desire for vengeance and to commit to the rule of law. It cannot be easy. Saddam's abuse ran deep and ran wide. But by granting him a fair trial—an opportunity to answer the charges—the Iraqi people are showing that Saddam's brutality was born of his nature and not theirs.

Cicero once said:

Let us remember that justice must be observed even to the lowest.

Today, let it be said that justice will be observed even by the once mighty.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Thank you, Mr. President.

IRAQ AND THE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is testifying today at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. She will be meeting with the full Senate later for a classified briefing.

I am sure one of the topics that will be discussed at length will be the Iraqi constitutional referendum of this last Saturday. That vote was an important milestone. The voting by so many Iraqis was again a demonstrable act of courage. It is my most sincere hope that in the months to come, the political process in Iraq moves forward, that a stable government takes control in Iraq, and that Iraq takes control of its own future.

But similar to many of my colleagues, and a growing majority of Americans, we will not be satisfied with the status quo or the stay-the-course answers that we hear over and over from the White House when it comes to the situation in Iraq. The most fundamental questions we have to ask of this President and this administration are, What is your plan for victory? What is your plan for success? What is your plan to bring American troops home from Iraq?

It now seems evident that the constitution will pass. It also seems evident that despite substantial opposition from the Sunni minority, no province will reject this constitution or, if any do, there will not be enough to, in fact, reject the whole document.

Sunnis make up 20 percent of the population but 90 percent of the insurgency in Iraq. Sectarian violence is claiming the lives of thousands of Iraqis. We can't even calculate how many. Some are fearful that this country could still fall apart.

Saturday's election is no guarantee of long-term democracy in Iraq, but it

was an important step forward and one that I applaud. The government that may now emerge needs to build legitimacy in Iraq and with its neighbors. It needs to take back control of its country from insurgency, chaos, and lawlessness so that American troops can come home.

Iraq cannot succeed if the Sunnis—one in five of the Iraqis—feel disenfranchised and alienated. It is a challenge to their leaders to put together a government now that truly reflects their country, to build not just a coalition of tribes but a nation. This must happen because the cost of destroying and now replacing the governing regime in Iraq has been so costly.

Saturday was a good day in Iraq, for sure. But the elections last January 30 also represented a good day for Iraq, and 543 Americans have lost their lives in Iraq since that election last January. Mr. President, 15,063 American service men and women have been wounded in Iraq, and 1,979 Americans have been killed. We are closing in on that awesome figure of 2,000 of our best and bravest soldiers having given their lives in Iraq.

Iraq passed an important milestone Saturday with the constitutional referendum. The process was a refreshing demonstration of democracy at work in a region unaccustomed to such a display of civic participation. But the product, some have argued, is flawed. Nonetheless, Iraqis, with their vote, have taken a step in this political process forward. This opportunity for Iraq has come at a high cost for America.

As the number of Americans killed continues to grow, and the number of injured increases as well, do we have a clear plan in place? At what moment in time will the Iraqi Army battalions be prepared to step forward so that Americans can step back? At what point in time will the Iraqi police force, the Iraqi security forces, say, "We can now control our own country and now Americans can go home"?

This administration gives us the vaguest notion that it is somehow wrong to think about when that date may come. Perhaps it is wrong to announce it but not to have a plan to reach it. It is something that concerns me.

A few weeks ago, Generals Casey and Abizaid told a meeting in Congress that only one battalion was prepared to stand and fight by itself in Iraq today—only one battalion of the Iraqi Army. It is a far cry from 150,000-plus American soldiers who stand and fight today, who risk their lives today.

Today, the trial of Saddam Hussein is beginning. We were greeted this morning with all the major news organizations showing the closed-circuit videotape and film of the trial. It is a good thing that he is standing trial because he is a vicious murderer, a thug, and a monster of a human being.

However, Americans are questioning, still, whether or not we have paid too heavy a price for this day to have ar-

rived and asking of this administration, now that he is standing trial: How much longer will we be standing trial in Iraq as we wait for the outcome each day of the bloody fighting?

What has changed since May of 2003 is that the costs of the war have risen, are still climbing; the trust the American people have placed in the President has been shaken. What has also changed is, while the cost of war continues to grow, the alleged justifications for the war have multiplied, and the clarity of our purpose has diminished dramatically. This is a terrible and tragic combination.

Saddam was a monster. That is true. But we must never forget that of all the many reasons given to us by this administration to invade Iraq, the evil nature of Saddam was the only one that has proven true. Except for the brutality of Saddam Hussein—as bad as it was, as horrible as it was—all the other reasons for going to war the administration put forth turned out not to be accurate. There were no weapons of mass destruction. We still, many years later, have found no evidence of that claim, made over and over and over again at the highest levels of this administration.

The 9/11 Commission showed us there was no support for al-Qaida in Iraq. Yet as recently as last Sunday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice tried to again link al-Qaida and 9/11 with Saddam Hussein.

The 9/11 Commission made it clear, there is no linkage. The war has not increased our own security. Some can argue—and I think convincingly—that it has made the world a more dangerous place. It has created a training ground for terrorism in Iraq where insurgents come from surrounding countries to train themselves in killing American soldiers, to go out and do even worse to Americans and others all around the world.

The only reason left for this war was the removal of Saddam Hussein. Two-thirds of Americans, when they measure that benefit against the enormous cost in blood and treasure, conclude it may not have been worth that price. Nearly \$200 billion has been spent, nearly 2,000 Americans have been killed, and the pricetag goes up every day in terms of American lives and American treasure.

Our national interest has suffered in other ways as well. The war has altered the international strategic environment to our disadvantage. Let's begin with Iran. Iran gives every sign that it is determined to acquire nuclear weapons. Such a development threatens regional stability and our own national security. It is not in our interest or the world's interest. In August, the Bush administration went to the diplomats of more than a dozen countries and presented an hour-long slide show on Iran's nuclear program. This PowerPoint briefing incorporated satellite imagery and other data to try to convince other nations that Iran's nuclear program is aimed at producing

weapons, not energy. But who could look at such a slide show and not think back to February 2003, when Secretary of State Colin Powell made a similar case to the United Nations about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? An embarrassing moment. That was, in my opinion, the low point in a very distinguished and noble public career of national service of Secretary of State Colin Powell. Indeed, it was the stature of Secretary Powell alone that lent such force to that argument. To learn later that the facts were not there had to be a crushing blow to this man who has given so much to America.

Two years later we found no weapons of mass destruction. Mohamed ElBaradei and the International Atomic Energy Agency told us there were no weapons of mass destruction. We ignored them. They asked for more time to prove their point; we rejected it. The Bush administration decided we had to invade. We couldn't wait for allies. We couldn't wait for proof. We couldn't wait. Now ElBaradei and the IAEA have been proven right and recently were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The damage to our national credibility by presenting a distorted case for the war has been severe. Our ability to persuade the international community is now diminished. So is our ability to draw in allies to join us in this effort. And the beneficiaries of our policies sadly have been many rogue nations. Like the boy who cried wolf, America now must overcome the damage done to our credibility by false claims that we laid before the world as the justification for the invasion of Iraq. At the same time, the dangers of terrorism to our Nation, our personnel, and citizens abroad, and our friends and allies have grown. The war in Iraq drained away financial resources, military forces, and intelligence experts from the war on terror. Osama bin Laden still remains at large, over 4 years after September 11. Where terrorists once had training camps to hone their skills, they now have a war itself in Iraq. Sadly, our soldiers are their targets.

Recently, the Director of National Intelligence released a letter apparently from Ayman al-Zawahiri, the No. 2 leader in al-Qaida, to Mr. al-Zarqawi, the group's top agent in Iraq. The letter provides a chilling portrait of a cold-blooded terrorist. I know many people will try to use this letter to solidify their arguments of why we need to stay in Iraq. I don't advocate a precipitous tomorrow-like withdrawal from Iraq. I think that would be disastrous. But the Zawahiri letter is one more piece of evidence that Iraq has now become a center of terrorist activity, whereas before the war it was not. The horrible irony of this war is that President Bush's invasion has created more energy behind terrorism in the Middle East.

The President is offering America a false choice when he says we have to

decide between resolve and retreat in Iraq. We must not just withdraw, but we cannot simply stay the same course that has brought us to this place in time. If we simply withdraw now, the current instability in Iraq would balloon into a full civil war, and we will have produced another failed state, owned and operated by terrorists like the Taliban in Afghanistan. If we just keep doing what we have been doing, we will continue to spend American tax dollars and, more importantly, sacrifice the lives of our brave soldiers. We must take positive action to try to alter the strategic equation that has fueled terrorism and placed a heavy strain on our Army, National Guard, and Reserves, constrained our options toward Iran and North Korea, and cost us nearly 2,000 American lives in Iraq.

Diplomacy has to be part of this new campaign. Our military leaders make it clear, they cannot defeat the insurgency. The way to defeat insurgency is politically and economically and diplomatically. Right now there are almost no troops from Muslim nations who are fighting at the side of the Iraqi government. There are almost no Arab diplomats in Iraq. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice must reach out to the Arab gulf states and others and convince them that a secure and stable Iraq is in their interest as well as ours and that they must assume some of the risk and burden of this enterprise. That is no easy sell, given the way we have approached this war to date. But it is an effort that we must undertake, along with the Iraqis themselves.

The President needs to let the Iraqi people know that we will not remain indefinitely in Iraq, and communicate that message to the rest of the world as well. The Iraqi government and its security forces need to prepare for assuming all the functions expected of them by a free and sovereign Iraqi people to defend their own nation so American troops can come home. The administration's admission, however, that only one battalion of the Iraqi army is capable of operating on its own does not really bring us any closer to meeting this goal. It is the responsibility of the administration to make it clear why we have not done better in training and preparing Iraqi soldiers to replace American soldiers, and it is the responsibility of this administration to train Iraqi security forces so that, in fact, our soldiers can come home. It is time for the people and leaders of Iraq to take control of their own country and their own destiny.

We are not abandoning Iraq. Indeed, we and Iraqis themselves must reach out to other partners, especially the predominantly Muslim countries, to collaborate in the consolidation of Iraqi security and democracy. We are not setting a date for departure. We are simply letting the Iraqis know, in the clearest possible terms, that we intend to bring our forces home. Reminding all concerned that we will not stay refutes the assertion that we intend to

establish permanent military bases in Iraq, an allegation that, unfortunately, fuels the insurgency.

We should do nothing that would mislead the Iraqis into thinking they have unlimited time to take control of their own destiny. An unending American occupation is neither in Iraq's interest nor in ours. If the Iraqis made progress on Saturday, moving toward a constitution, moving toward a government, moving toward a nation, we must tell them that there is a responsibility of nationhood that goes beyond the obvious establishment of government. The most important responsibility is to secure your own borders, to protect your own people, to provide for the common defense of your own nation. Now that is a responsibility that must be shouldered by the Iraqis. If we are uncertain in speaking to this new Iraqi government about our plans and our timetable in Iraq, then I think they will count on American soldiers to be there risking their lives indefinitely. That is unacceptable.

This administration has to make it clear that Iraqi army soldiers are prepared to shoulder that burden and to give relief to American soldiers so that they can return home to a hero's welcome and to their families who wait anxiously for that day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). The Senator from Delaware.

HURRICANE KATRINA RESPONSE

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, today I rise to discuss how we could be doing better in our response to Hurricane Katrina. I just spoke with one of Louisiana's Senators coming over to the Chamber to speak, and the word that I heard with respect to the situation on the ground, particularly the response of FEMA to the ongoing crisis, was discouraging. We can do better. We have to be able to do better for the people there and for those who are footing the bill, the taxpayers.

Hurricane Katrina was truly an unprecedented event. It was in all likelihood the worst natural disaster in our Nation's history. It was certainly the worst natural disaster I have witnessed in my lifetime. I can understand then that there might be some mistakes made, that there might not be easy solutions to some of the problems faced by millions of Americans directly affected by this storm. But I believe there are too many key areas where we have experienced clear failures that just cannot be shrugged off. We have all heard about the slow initial response to the storm. We have also heard about the no-bid contracts that probably weren't necessary. But I am going to speak for a few minutes today about a truly distressing failure that is leading to hardship among Katrina evacuees and is also wasting a lot of Federal taxpayer dollars.

As my colleagues are aware, hundreds of thousands of gulf coast residents have seen their homes severely