

propaganda machine. The country had no commercial TV or radio stations, and no independent newspapers or magazines. Today, Iraq has a thriving, competitive, free press, with 44 commercial TV stations, 72 commercial radio stations, and more than 100 independent newspapers and magazines. Iraqis can now make up their own minds, based on varying viewpoints in a marketplace of ideas, about the future of their new democracy.

And another foundation of freedom is taking hold—Iraq is experiencing the beginnings of a competitive financial market, with a modernized Iraqi stock exchange.

And Iraqis are for the first time experiencing the rule of law at work in their legal system, with an independent judiciary free to judge cases on their merits, not under the orders of Saddam Hussein and his henchmen.

Ever more, Iraqis are seeing the insurgents for the thugs, thieves, and indiscriminate killers that they are. In just the past nine months, there has been an astonishing 500 percent increase in the number of tips regarding insurgents that Iraqi civilians are providing to security forces.

Iraq is the central battleground in the war on terror. And yet despite the evident progress, some want to cut and run. They claim that our troops have simply done all that they can do, and that the United States should set arbitrary timelines for withdrawing our forces. Mr. President, I strongly disagree and believe that setting such a timeline would only embolden the terrorists and send the message that the United States has lost its resolve in the war on terror. This is the wrong message. Any timeline for withdrawal must be driven by success—not artificially tied to a calendar.

This is not the first time in our history when cynics and skeptics have balked in the face of landmark challenges. A few years may have passed since I had the pleasure of serving President Ronald Reagan in his Cabinet, but I can still remember the naysayers attacking him for his fixed resolve in fighting the cold war. They questioned President Reagan's reasoning, they questioned his strategy, and they questioned America's chances of coming away victorious in a battle to free Russia and other countries from the grasp of communism. President Reagan rejected communism, he rejected the iron curtain, and he refused to concede that freedom would not prevail. While the Soviet Union was extending its influence and doctrine throughout the world, President Reagan, in the face of severe criticism, pursued a different vision. He knew that the enemy must be defeated, not tolerated. We now know he was right in his actions to bring an end to communism—millions were freed and that global threat no longer exists.

Today, naysayers are at it again. Their droning doubt is all too familiar. Much of this defeatist criticism is

being leveled by the very same people who, having access to the same intelligence as the president, agreed that Iraq posed a real and immediate threat. And these very same people supported going into Iraq to fight the war on terror. Now they want to throw up their hands and walk away before the job is done.

No one ever said this would be easy, and mistakes have certainly been made. This is a war—and it is painful and horrific. Every life lost is one tragic loss too many. But we must ensure that their sacrifice was not in vain.

We must honor our fallen heroes, heroes like Major Jeffrey Toczykowski, by completing the job they set out to do. Major Toczykowski, seen here, was a Special Forces detachment commander assigned to the 10th Special Forces Group. Two weeks ago in Anbar province, he made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. In his last email home to his family and friends, he wrote how they should respond if he were to lose his life in battle: And I quote:

Don't ever think that you are defending me by slamming the global war on terrorism or the U.S. goals in that war. As far as I am concerned, we can send guys like me to go after them, or we can wait for them, to come back to us again. I died, doing something I believed in and have no regrets, except that I couldn't do more.

What a powerful testament to the commitment of our service members fighting the war on terror.

Just yesterday, we debated an amendment to the Defense authorization bill that would have forced the administration to set an arbitrary date for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. I am pleased the Senate rejected this proposal. The Frist-Warner amendment we accepted—79-19—sent a message—a forward-looking message—that we expect the Iraqis to continue their progress—and the Congress, in its oversight, will continue to receive reports on the progress being made. The timeline we should focus on is December 15 the election of a parliamentary government. The establishment of a constitutional democracy, coupled with the continued training of Iraqi security forces—now exceeding 210,000 personnel—will in time allow the Iraqis to defend themselves, and the United States to bring our troop levels down.

Around the country, Iraqi forces are now overseeing 72 percent of security checkpoints and leading 43 percent of all combat patrols. Two Iraqi brigades have been assigned their own battle space in Baghdad in an area once a haven for insurgents.

Freedom and democracy in Iraq are the terrorists' worst nightmare. They know what is at stake and try desperately to derail our success. In a letter intercepted last month from Bin Laden's deputy Zawahiri to al-Qaida's leader in Iraq—the terror network's plan was exposed: to expel the Americans from Iraq, establish radical Islamist authority in the country, and

extend the terrorists' jihad into neighboring countries and around the world. They seek to destroy our very way of life. We cannot cut and run—we know all too well what is at stake in this global war against terror. To our men and women in uniform who are protecting our freedom and our security, I say thank you and God bless you. You make us so very proud.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

FIGHTING THE WAR ON TERRORISM

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from North Carolina for her comments. Certainly I agree with what she has had to say.

Having spent the last weekend, as most of us did, celebrating various events on Veterans Day, I was very much impressed with what we did in my State of Wyoming where we had ceremonies at cemeteries, recognizing all that our veterans have done throughout the years for this country, and the sacrifices that were made by many people over many years to allow us to continue to have the freedoms which we have in our country.

I was particularly impressed by one of the events we had at a school where kids—junior high youngsters—sat there listening to the events that had gone by, and I think probably mostly unaware of the fact that there had been years of sacrifice by so many people to maintain and to protect the freedom of this country.

I think it is appropriate, as we look at all that has been done over the years, that we again focus on those who are now continuing to protect the freedoms of this country—those who are now in the Middle East doing the things we need to be done to ensure that in this country we have our freedom and that this freedom will be expanded to others. I think it is appropriate that we talk about this at this time. It is appropriate also that we continue to support our troops who are there doing these things for us.

One of the most difficult things that could happen in terms of our success and accomplishing our goals there would be to erode the support we have here—and that is not going to happen. We know we will support our troops doing the jobs they are doing.

The war on terror is being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq to fundamentally change the environment that has given rise to Islamic extremism and, of course, brought about, among other things, the terror attacks of 9/11. It is one to bring justice to not only the perpetrators of those horrific attacks but also to change the conditions in the Middle East that brought them about. That is the test. That is the job we must finish. The introduction of a stable democracy and freedom to that oppressed region of the world is the best way to address long term that program and problem.

The ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are necessary to neutralize and eliminate the elements that produced extreme terrorism. We have made great steps since the liberation in Iraq and Afghanistan from the brutal regimes of Saddam Hussein and the Taliban. Both countries, as we all know, have reached major milestones in recent months by dramatically electing their own governments. The Iraqi people turned out again in great numbers and voted for a new constitution; 79 percent of Iraqi voters accepted in that vote, including a Sunni minority. This is real progress.

On the 15th of December, Iraqis will go to the polls once again to vote on parliamentary elections. This is an unmistakable shift from tyranny and is being replaced with democracy.

The Iraqi troops and forces have shouldered a great deal of the security efforts, as they should. I was very impressed when I was in Iraq at the training taking place for the troops. I was impressed riding around in military vehicles when the little kids on the street waved and cheered when they would see U.S. forces. I am very impressed, also, at the normalcy, day to day, for most Iraqis. Unfortunately, we have insurgents and the terrorists who disturb citizens on a daily basis. However, the normalcy there is relatively calm, surprisingly so, on the streets of Baghdad.

There are a good many Iraqi army operation specialists and battalions in the regular military but also looking into the policing aspect. It is not in many cases a regular military operation as much as it is a security operation for insurgents. They are doing both of these things. I am impressed with that.

Thirty-six of the units are taking leave with their coalition partners in operating independently; 28 special police battalions are capable of these operations. More than 87,000 soldiers and sailors have been trained. That is a very good thing.

It is fair to say we are making significant progress in the war on terror and creating a stable and democratic Iraq and Afghanistan that will no longer be the breeding ground for aggression. President Bush's vision is clear. Our work in Iraq and Afghanistan is essential to our own security.

There has been great debate, discussion, and questions about why we are there. The fact is, we are there. The fact is, we had reason to be there. The fact is, all the folks who are now grumbling had the same information and helped make the decision at the time and agreed with the decision at the time. We need to complete our task.

By taking the fight to the enemy, we have protected America at home. We have to remember for years terrorists attacked the United States with little or no reaction from the United States. In 1993, terrorists bombed the World Trade Center, killing 6 people and wounding more than 1,000. In 1996, terrorists bombed the U.S. military living

quarters at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, killing 19. In 1998, followers of Osama bin Laden attacked U.S. Embassies in Kenya, killing and wounding hundreds. In 2000, Osama bin Laden's followers attacked the USS Cole in the harbor of Yemen, killing 17 and wounding 39. Nearly 3,000 innocent Americans were killed September 11 before we resolved we were under attack.

In Afghanistan, United States and British forces joined the ally, anti-Taliban troops in the assault. We are fighting beside those partners over there and moving forward. We have a number of activities going on.

In September 2005, Afghanistan held the first parliamentary election in Afghanistan in more than 30 years. Five hundred eighty-three men and women previously regarded as third-class citizens campaigned for 25 of the available seats. Afghan women received ballots in September 2005. In a country of nearly 30 million voting age people, more than 12 million registered to vote. It is a substantial change.

In 2003, the forces we have talked about already in Iraq went on with votes. In June the Iraqi people assumed full sovereignty and moved forward and more than 8 million people voted.

This is where we are. We are making real progress. We have a goal. No one knows exactly what the date will be for accepting that goal. I don't think anyone ever knows a date in wars. We do have to describe more clearly our purpose. We are doing that. We have to understand more clearly we are making a good deal of progress.

The special inspector general's most recent report indicates service men and women completed work on 762 out of 834 schools. I was there, and we toured some of the schools. They had such a change, brought about largely by our troops. We put 5 out of 12 major airports back in place, 66 railroad stations, and so on.

A great deal of progress is being made. We have had a good many changes. In terms of the leadership that used to be all around Osama bin Laden, much of that is gone. Much of that leadership is no longer there. We are changing.

People understand the people of that country can defend and take care of themselves. We are moving in that direction.

Our fighting men and women continue to help in Iraq. We will continue to help. I remain concerned about the violence. I agree the cost is high. I agree clearly that as soon as we complete our task, we should do that and turn this over to the Iraqis. The important thing is they are prepared to begin to go ahead and operate their country for which we have helped provide the opportunity.

It is very important to complete the mission. I believe we are succeeding. The stakes are very high. I believe it is terribly important as Americans we understand what has happened is simi-

lar to what has happened through the years where people have given so much to be able to move and change the world so that our freedoms and other freedoms can exist, and we have the kind of world we all would like. The stakes are very high. Certainly, we want to continue to complete our task. It is important we do that. It is important we stay attached.

I have no problem asking for more information with regard to where we are. I am very opposed to the idea of insisting on the date set by the President. That is not reasonable in this situation. I am very proud and very pleased of what our folks are doing there. I am glad we are doing the job that needs to be done. There is real progress being made. We want to continue that progress.

I say, again, as many Members are saying, we have engaged in a very necessary activity. We are making real progress. It is terribly important we support the people who are there, that we support the completion of this task that we have set about of freedom for all.

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

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

COMMERCE-STATE-JUSTICE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I will spend a few minutes talking about the Commerce-Justice-State-Science appropriations bill and about my reasons for voting against it when it comes up today.

This year we added \$538 billion to our debt as of September 30 for the last year. That translates into \$1,783 for every man, woman, and child in this country. The cost of every project or program that we cannot afford will be borne with compounding interest by our children and our grandchildren. The American people choose every day to determine their financial priorities. It should be not too much for them to ask Congress to do the same thing.

There are multiple projects that are funded in this bill that should not be considered within the priorities of what we have. The first is, as we are fighting a war, we have a Katrina, Rita, and Wilma disaster, we have \$538 billion that we could not pay for last year that we added to the debt, and we are going to put \$680 million into a program at NASA to go to Mars? I believe Mars should wait. I don't believe we should be spending \$680 million to go to Mars. I believe we should spend \$680 million to help our neighbors and our friends in the hurricane-ravaged States.