

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.

We are going to spend \$80 million for the Advanced Technology Program. Granted, that is less than what we spent before, but since 1990 the American taxpayers have given over three-quarters of a billion dollars to Fortune 500 companies for technology programs where they, in fact, could have financed those things themselves.

We are going to spend \$1.5 million to study highly migratory sharks, \$825,000 to study Hawaiian monk seals, and \$235,000 to study yellow-finned tuna. We are going to spend \$7 million on the Alaska Fisheries Marketing Board, which this year just spent \$500,000 to paint an airplane to have a salmon on it.

The priorities are wrong. We need to readjust the priorities. I hope my colleagues will look at that and make the effort.

The other thing I think is critical with this bill and is underfunded—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be informed the majority's time has expired.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am prepared to yield 2 minutes from the minority time to the Senator from Oklahoma.

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

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Illinois.

Byrne-JAG funding is cut in this bill. If there is anything we know that our sheriffs, our police departments, our drug courts, our drug rehabilitation programs need, it is help in terms of fighting the battle on drugs. I am very disappointed. The Senate passed \$900 million for Byrne-JAG grants. It was paid for. It was offset when we passed it through the Senate. It came with full offsets to prioritize, to meet the needs of those people who are presently caught up in drugs.

In Oklahoma, we have had fantastic results with drug courts and drug rehabilitation. Eighty-one percent of the people who now come through these drug courts have a full-time job and never regress back to drugs. What we know is drug treatment works. What we know is drug courts work. It is time for us to reconsider our priorities.

I ask the Members of this body to reconsider this conference report in light of the lack of priorities that should be there.

With that, I yield the remainder of my time and thank the Senator from Illinois for his courtesy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this morning's newspapers across America have lead stories that I think are a grim reminder to us of the reality of life in Washington and the challenges we face. The lead stories in most newspapers across America relate to a vote on the Senate floor yesterday. I believe it was a historic vote. By a vote of 79

to 19, Republican and Democratic Senators said it is time for change in this administration's policy in Iraq.

Certainly, when you look at the statistics, it is understandable: Over 2,060 of our best and bravest soldiers have lost their lives in Iraq. Over 15,000 have been gravely wounded, some of them with injuries that will change their lives. And, of course, 25,000 or 30,000 innocent Iraqis—innocent Iraqis—have died during the course of this war.

This war has gone on for over 3 years, after the administration promised us, in the words of Secretary Rumsfeld, that he could not imagine we would be there for more than 6 months. It is now beyond 3 years; no end in sight.

The American people are frustrated, as they should be; frustrated by the fact that this administration made a case for the war in Iraq that was false. You can recall it, as I do, the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, Condoleezza Rice, even Secretary of State Powell, making statements about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq that were a threat to the Middle East and to the world that could easily fall into the hands of terrorists; statements over and over again about nuclear weapons, Condoleezza Rice talking about mushroom clouds that we could fear if we did not invade Iraq and stop Saddam Hussein; and, of course, linking our national tragedy of 9/11 with Saddam Hussein, saying that somehow he had connections with al-Qaida.

Well, it turned out all of those things were false—every single one of them—so false to the point where the President had to do something I do not think has ever been done in the history of this Nation. He had to apologize and recant a remark he made in his State of the Union Address about this yellow cake coming from Niger in Africa so the Iraqis could use it to make nuclear weapons. It turned out it was a phony. It was not true.

So we were drawn into a war under false pretenses. We all knew how terrible Saddam Hussein was, but we certainly came to understand that the specific reasons given for the invasion of Iraq turned out not to be true, one after the other. Weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, connections with al-Qaida, yellow cake from Niger, so-called mobile biological weapons laboratories—all of these things turned out to be totally false.

It is understandable the American people are concerned about it because if you measure an abuse of power by a government, could there be an abuse of power any worse than misleading the people of a country into believing that a war is necessary?

That is, of course, why the Senate Democrats took to the floor just 2 weeks ago and demanded that the promised investigation of this administration for the potential misuse of intelligence be completed by the Senate Intelligence Committee. It has been over 20 months—20 months—since we

were promised that this honest investigation would take place, and nothing has happened.

There have been small parts of it that have been addressed, but I think we all know what the story is. The Senate Intelligence Committee, under the control of the President's party, does not want to open that door and look inside. Well, why should we? Why should we reflect and dwell on the past? Some say: Let's look forward. But if we do not get to the heart of this issue, the truth of the matter, if we are not honest with the American people and straightforward as to what happened leading up to that invasion of Iraq, then I think we are derelict in our constitutional responsibilities.

This Congress is designed as one branch of Government to serve as oversight of the executive branch of Government. The failure of the Senate Intelligence Committee, for more than 20 months, to produce this intelligence analysis, which they promised, is proof positive they are dragging their feet, unwilling to accept the responsibility which they have publicly proclaimed.

So yesterday we passed on the floor, by a vote of 79 to 19, a clear statement to this administration that the policy in Iraq must change. No. 1, we said the year 2006 will not just be another year in Iraq, another year of casualties, another year of death, another year of our despondency over whether this is going to end well. It will be a year of significant transition. That is what the Democratic amendment said. That is what was adopted.

Secondly, we served notice on Iraqis that it is their responsibility, not the American responsibility, to secure their own country and to build a political coalition that can defeat the insurgency. I had hoped we would have even stronger language to say to the Iraqis: We are not here indefinitely. We want to bring our troops home. The Republican side watered down that language, but the message was still clear.

The third element is important as well. Accountability is essential. This administration must be held accountable for whether we were prepared not only for the invasion of Iraq but for what occurred afterwards. You know what happened afterwards. Secretary Rumsfeld visited with our troops, and a soldier came forward, held up his hand to ask a question, and said: Mr. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, why is it that we soldiers have to scavenge through junk piles to find pieces of armor to stick on these humvees to protect ourselves? A moment of great embarrassment for the Secretary, but I am glad that soldier had the courage to stand up and say what we already knew.

We were not prepared. We sent our troops into combat without the necessary humvee armor, without the necessary body armor, without the necessary protection for our helicopters. It was done, and in some respects too late