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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a Senator from the State of Alaska.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.
Eternal Spirit, we are disappearing dust without You.

Draw near to us and enable us to find in Your presence our dignity and destiny. Give us the sovereign knowledge that we belong to You and have been created in Your image. Teach us to serve and love humanity.

Today, keep our Senators safe as they labor for You and country. Make their tomorrow bright through the unfolding of Your powerful providence. Guide them through the darkest night as they meditate on Your precepts. Show us the path to life and make us glad as we walk with You.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 17, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a

Senator from the State of Alaska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Ms. MURKOWSKI assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, today the Senate will begin with a period of morning business. Yesterday we debated the genetic nondiscrimination legislation and, as a reminder, we will vote on passage of that bill at 3 p.m. today.

Throughout today's session, we will also be working on clearing the high risk pooling bill, as well as the committee funding resolution. The chairman and ranking member have been working on a resolution related to Lebanon, and we may be able to clear that resolution for floor action.

Later today, I will have more to say on tomorrow's schedule and the schedule for when we return from the President's Day recess.

LEBANON'S FORMER PRIME MINISTER RAFIQ HARIRI

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, on leader time, I will make a very brief statement on the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.

On behalf of the Senate, I will spend these few moments to rise and condemn in the harshest terms the cowardly and despicable assassination of Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

Monday, as Rafiq Hariri's motorcade was traveling along Beirut's Corniche seafront, a car bomb loaded with 600

pounds of explosives detonated, killing the former Prime Minister and 13 others.

Our condolences go out to the Hariri family and the people of Lebanon. They have lost a great man, and they have lost a beloved leader.

Rafiq Hariri served as Prime Minister in the aftermath of a devastating civil war that wrecked the country for 15 years. Over his 10 years in office, Prime Minister Hariri helped to revitalize the Lebanese economy and rebuild its shattered infrastructure, including the rebirth of Beirut's historic downtown district. His murder is a direct attack on the aspirations of the Lebanese people, and an attack on civilization itself.

We demand an investigation, and we demand that the killers, and any backers of the killers, be brought to justice.

Further, we strongly urge that Syria withdraw its 14,000 troops and intelligence personnel in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 and the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act passed by this body in 2003.

We support the President's decision to recall our Ambassador from Syria and urge the President to restrict the mobility of Syrian diplomats in Washington, DC, and at the United Nations in New York City.

Furthermore, we urge the President to seek a United Nations Security Council resolution that establishes an independent investigation into the assassination of the Prime Minister.

Today, the Lebanese people mourn the murder of a great leader. They line the streets—Christian, Druze, and Sunni—in an extraordinary show of unity.

Our message to them is clear: "The United States Senate stands with you. Your voices will be heard."

I yield the floor.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business until 12 noon, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee, and the second 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee, and the remaining time shall be divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, as we begin to debate the budget sent to us by President Bush, there will be a lot of discussion in the Chamber about spending restraints, about being conservative, and so on. The budget sent to us by President Bush proposes the highest budget deficit in the history of our country. I will be going to a hearing later this morning on the proposal to spend \$82 billion more on Iraq and Afghanistan. That is not in the budget. It is an emergency request.

The President's proposed budget, with a deficit well over \$400 billion in history, is short by somewhere around \$80 billion that will be spent on an emergency in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it also uses the Social Security trust fund, which could not be used for other purposes. So the real budget deficit is around \$650 billion, which is a very serious problem. Our fiscal policy is off track, and we need to get it on track.

We are going to talk about spending issues as we go along in this budget process. There will be some discussion about big issues, and some about small issues.

Let me talk for a moment about two issues that represent, I think, a profound waste of taxpayers' money.

Let me introduce you to Fat Albert. This is an AEROSAT blimp, an AEROSAT balloon. Fat Albert has been around for some while. In fact, Fat Albert is tethered about 20,000 feet above the ground with thousands of feet of cable, and it is used with camera equipment to send television signals into Cuba to tell the Cuban people how wonderful life is in our country. Of course, they know how wonderful life is in our

country, which is why they get on a boat to try to cross the waters to come to America. And if they decide not to get on the boat, they can simply tune into a Miami radio station and hear a little about America. But we are sending television signals into Cuba through TV Marti, which has been funded by the American taxpayers for 16 years.

We are broadcasting television signals which no one can see because Castro easily jams the signal. We did for a long while televise it from 3 o'clock in the morning until 8 o'clock in the morning. My guess is that, even if the signals got through, there aren't a lot of Cuban people up at 3 o'clock in the morning watching television. But, nonetheless, the signals don't get through because they are jammed by the Cuban Government.

For 16 years, despite the fact that we are broadcasting signals which no one can see, we have spent \$189 million broadcasting signals from Fat Albert, tethered 20,000 feet above the ground, to Cubans who can't see it.

This year, what does the budget request? The budget request is to double the funding for TV Marti. It is unbelievable. People will not understand this when they look back and say, Wait a second; they spent nearly a quarter of \$1 billion sending television signals no one could see for over 16 years? They will say, do you mean that at a time with record deficits the President wanted to double the budget for television signals no one can see?

Fat Albert once got loose with 20,000 feet of tethered cable following it. Fat Albert wandered into the Everglades. So the thing gets loose and goes over the Everglades, and they are chasing it with helicopters. Finally, it lands on the top of some trees in the Everglades. They had to find a way to get it off. Helicopters had to come down and commandos rappelled down to salvage the equipment. It is a comedy of errors.

But the administration has a plan now. They have decided they are going to get rid of Fat Albert, or maybe continue to use it but only part time. Now they want to buy an airplane for \$8 million so they can send an airplane up to send television signals to TV Marti to the Cuban people who can't see them; \$8 million for the airplane, \$11 million for the broadcast, and \$2 million for maintenance on the plane.

It is like Katy bar the door; it is as if there is no deficit.

It is unbelievable to me that we are going to continue to spend money we do not have on something we do not need, and send television signals from an aerostat balloon and now an airplane that viewers cannot see. This does not pass the laugh test.

I am not a fan of Fidel Castro. I want the Cuban people to be free. I want democracy to come to Cuba.

But our country has decided, with China and with North Vietnam, both Communist countries, the best way to move a Communist country in the

right direction is through travel and trade, through engagement. We have followed that rule with Communist China and Communist Vietnam, encouraging people to travel there and encouraging trade with both. The sole exception is with Cuba, where we have had an embargo for over 40 years. Fidel Castro has lived through 10 U.S. Presidencies. His message to the Cuban people is, of course, Our economy is in tatters; we have a 500-pound gorilla with its fist around our neck with an embargo.

The quicker way to remove Castro from office, in my judgment, is to open trade and travel to Cuba. Nonetheless, the administration does not want to do that.

So we have travel restrictions in Cuba. I have held up a poster of Joni Scott who went to Cuba to distribute free Bibles on the street corners in Havana. Do you know what happened to her? She got discovered by the U.S. Treasury Department and they slapped her with a \$10,000 fine. I held up a picture of Joan Sloat who was a retired senior bicyclist who joined a Canadian bicycle troop to go biking in Cuba. They tracked her down as she was by her son's bedside, dying of brain cancer, and they decided to slap her with a big fine and then decided to attach her Social Security payments.

They are so obsessed in this administration with the issue of Cuba it does not matter how much money they waste. We have something called the Office of Foreign Assets Control, OFAC, down in the Treasury Department. It is supposed to be tracking the financing of terrorist organizations. Do you know what? They have nearly twice as many people working on tracking Americans suspected of taking a vacation in Cuba than they do tracking terrorists' moneys that are supporting Osama bin Laden's organization. It is unthinkable that is what they are doing, but that is what they are doing.

On top of all of that obsession, what we have is a program called Television Marti which does not work, which wastes every dollar it spends, and the President says, Let's double the funding, at a time when we have the highest budget deficit in the history of this country.

There are some areas of Federal spending that ought to be abolished. I, along with my colleague Senator WYDEN and others, will offer legislation to abolish this spending. It is unbelievable.

I didn't mention that on October 10, 2003, the President held a Rose Garden event to say he was going to supplement the efforts of Fat Albert to send signals to the Cubans because they are jammed, by taking a high-tech airplane, called a Commando Solo C-130. There are only a handful in the world and we have used them in big trouble spots in the world to be able to broadcast emergency signals to people. But the President announced he was going