

happened and we did not try to do something about it.

Now, the UK, quote unquote our friend and partner. They own a piece of the American pie at \$223.2 billion, buying our debt. Meanwhile, the President says, follow me. The Republican Congress says, we know exactly what we are doing. Taiwan. Taiwan. People laugh, oh, Taiwan this, Taiwan what. But guess what? They own \$71.3 billion of the American pie and our debt. That means that they own something.

The President says he wants an ownership society. Hello. It is going to other nations. Our neighbor, Canada. I am going to put them right here: \$53.8 billion that they own of our debt. That means that we owe them; financially we owe them.

Just got finished talking about Red China, Communist China. A lot of our jobs are in China. A lot of Americans have to train Chinese workers to take over their jobs, and then they are fired and they are put on some sort of government assistance.

China comes in at a whopping \$249.8 billion. A whopping \$249.8 billion, using a lot of our money because they have a positive trade with us, and we have negative trade with them. But better yet, you let the Republican majority tell you, and the President tells you, oh, we know exactly what we are doing, do not worry, we got you.

OPEC nations. Mr. DELAHUNT, I want you to talk further about this, including Saudi Arabia, comes in at \$67.8 billion of the American apple pie, the American apple pie.

And Japan, the island of Japan I must add, comes in big time, \$682.8 billion. \$682.8 billion. Mr. RYAN, it is not the Meek Report, the Delahunt Report or the Ryan Report. This is reality. And these numbers, Mr. Speaker, as you talk about third-party validators, are from the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

And I guarantee you, Mr. Snow does not report to us or anyone that has a Democrat behind their name. And anyone, I challenge them on the Republican side to march out here and start talking about how they are going to explain this, how they are going to explain selling America to other countries.

How they are going to explain with a straight face, come in here and say, we should make tax cuts permanent for billionaires, meanwhile we are borrowing from other nations to pay for it. How do you explain that, Mr. DELAHUNT? So when you start talking about special deals on ports and folks come out and say, well, I did not know anything about that. Wow, that is not anything new.

I did not know anything about the fact that there were not any weapons of mass destruction. I am tired of folks saying they do not know and we were wrong. I am tired of that. That is not the American way, Mr. DELAHUNT.

Mr. DELAHUNT. We did not know anything about Katrina being a dev-

astating natural disaster. We did not know about FEMA not having the resources. We did not know about the lack of coordination. You know what? You know what? They know nothing. They do not know how to govern.

And that is what I would describe as a habit that has developed over time, a habit of incompetence.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. No doubt about it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. DELAHUNT, you know what OPEC means and what they owe? I just want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, in case someone may say, well, they pointed out the obvious. Some may say the negative, if you ask the Republican majority. Oh, they are so negative. Well, guess what? We believe in telling the American people the truth.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Find a positive way to explain that. Our friends on the other side who say we are always being negative. Figure out, if they can explain to us a positive way of saying that this country is being sold off to other countries piece by piece.

If they can find a positive way of explaining that, we are open to it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. There you go. I do not how to do it.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I am just thinking here. You know how the political pundits divide this country up into blue States and red States. Well, you know, if you would bring back that previous poster, you know, you ought to paint those numbers there in red, because here is what is happening to the United States. It is becoming all red. It is becoming all red while we sit here and whistle in the dark.

Because we are indebting ourselves and our future to foreign nations and that map says it all, Mr. MEEK, says it all.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. DELAHUNT, let me just real quickly, because our hour is coming to an end. We, the Democrats, Mr. SPRATT who is our Democratic leader on the Budget Committee, 2006 budget resolution failed 165-264.

Republicans 0-28. The bottom line, no Republicans voted for it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. What is that?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. What this is saying is basically that we want to balance the budget, we want to pay as we go, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Before you can spend any money, you have got to find a way to pay for it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Not this borrow money from foreign countries stuff. Again, in Spratt substitute amendment to Resolution 393, 2005 budget, again, voted down 224, not one Republican voted to pay as we go, Mr. Speaker.

Now what I am going to do, Mr. RYAN, when we come back in an hour, I am going to read off other examples, at least five others within the last couple of years. We have tried to put this country on the right track. But guess what? The Republican majority has blocked us.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We heard from the President during the State of the Union address a bunch of fuzzy math, but we are going to balance the budget by 2009.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. No, they are saying that they are going to cut taxes. Only we have balanced the budget, the Democratic Congress.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We are going to cut the budget in half by 2009. That reminds me of the old Lou Rawls song, I will see you when I get there. Do you know what I mean?

This is just to put a bow on everything that we have been talking about. When we are paying the interest on all of this debt, you know, we are not borrowing the money from Sky Bank or Home Savings in downtown Warren, Ohio. We are borrowing it from these other countries, and we are paying them debt.

Look what we are doing just on the interest on the debt, Mr. MEEK, Mr. DELAHUNT. This is the net interest we pay in the 2007 budget, what we are going to have to pay, almost \$250 billion just on the interest on all of that money that Mr. MEEK showed you where we are borrowing it from.

But also look what we are not spending it on because of it. Here is education. Here is homeland security. Here is veterans. All of these programs are taking a hit because our friends on the other side do not know how to balance the budget. They waste spending. They lose \$9 billion in Iraq. They waste \$300 billion on 11,000 trailers sitting in the mud in Hope, Arkansas, and meanwhile Pell grants are going up, veterans are asked to pay more, and we cannot take care of our own ports.

We will be back in an hour. But if you want to get a hold of us, Members who are watching this in our offices, www.housedemocrats.gov/30something

Mr. MEEK of Florida. With that, thank you, Mr. RYAN, Mr. DELAHUNT. We would like to thank the Democratic leader for the time.

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUHLMAN of New York). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to come before the House this evening with another edition of the Official Truth Squad to, as we have talked about, kind of set the record straight.

I want to thank the Republican leadership and the Republican Conference for allowing me and other Members of our conference to come and talk this evening.

The group that we have just heard, I was a little encouraged at the very beginning, because the tone was a little different, but then they just could not help themselves. They just could not help themselves. So we launched into

hyperbole, and we launched into disinformation, and we launched into misinformation, and we launched into distortion.

And frankly when I go home, when I talk to constituents at home, they say, what on Earth is going on up there in Congress? Why is it so partisan? And it is just tough to understand how people can be so doggone negative and think that it results in a positive outcome.

It is tough to understand how the politics of division are seen to be the way that we ought to go as a Nation. And it really is remarkable. We are, all of us, on the same team, Republicans, Democrats, Independents. We are all on the same team. We are all Americans.

We have got some incredible challenges that confront us as a Nation. And the politics of division, frankly, they do a disservice to us as a Nation. They are not helpful. I believe they are frankly shameful for the individuals that seem to believe that that is the way that we ought to conduct ourselves in public discourse. It just does not make any sense, Mr. Speaker. It does not make any sense.

It is not new, though. It has been going on in American politics, frankly, for a long time. Some would say that some folks on the other side of the aisle now have elevated it to a grand tradition and to a new height of excellence. But I want to read something that President Abraham Lincoln said that talked about the politics of division and how destructive it is.

□ 1815

He talked about his philosophy of government and social philosophy. "You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot encourage the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred. You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich."

It kind of crystallizes American philosophy, we are all in this together. Mr. Lincoln was a master at putting words and thoughts together and contrast together. I do not think it has ever been said better, frankly.

I highlight that because I encourage my colleagues all across this Chamber to recognize that the kind of politics of division that seems to be practiced by some is not helpful, it is not productive. It does a disservice to all.

We are here with another session of the Official Truth Squad. The Official Truth Squad began when a group of freshman Republicans got together and talked about just what we were hearing from our constituents. Why on earth do you hear the kind of personal accusations that go on up there in Washington?

So we thought we would put together some truthful episodes. So we try to come here almost every night while we are in Washington to bring about some truth and talk about honest, open de-

bate in Washington about a variety of topics.

Truth is incredibly important to the public discourse. If we are not dealing in truth, then we cannot reach the right conclusions. We cannot reach the right solutions to the challenges we have got.

I am joined tonight by a number of folks. I would like to recognize, first, Congresswoman SCHMIDT from the great State of Ohio. She has been just a stellar member of the freshman class and a great proponent of freedom and liberty. We are going to talk a little bit about national security tonight, and Congresswoman SCHMIDT comes with an incredible background and expertise and experience serving at both the local level and the State level and the first woman to represent the district that she represents from southern Ohio.

And we welcome you tonight, Mrs. SCHMIDT. Thank you so much for coming, and we look forward to your words on national security.

(Mrs. SCHMIDT asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the importance that we as a nation need to continue to do all we can to prevent another terrorist attack on our homeland.

Some of us on this side of the aisle a few weeks ago had the chance to listen to the President, and the President talked about how 9/11 has changed all of us, and it has changed us forever.

I remember that day as if it was yesterday. In fact, a few weeks ago I talked again about how when my daughter lived in New York in Manhattan and we as a Nation witnessed the attacks on the Twin Towers, my daughter and I, we had dinner at the Windows on the World just 30 days before the event. And I knew she did not work close to the building, but I did not know the subway system. So when I saw the towers come down I was scared, scared about where she was. I was also horribly afraid that another attack would occur.

The thing that was so frustrating was my husband and I could not get through to her because cell phones were the only way to get through and the buildings that housed the towers were destroyed. We did not get through to her for 2 full days. It made me realize how important national security and homeland security are for our Nation. Thank God, we only had fear and did not have regret and sorrow as so many others did.

We as a Nation must do everything in our power to prevent another attack. Period.

I rise today to congratulate the hard-working men and women of our intelligence agencies and first responders on preventing another attempt since 9/11. The headlines normally fail to mention that it has been over 4 years since our Nation was hit by those terrorists on that horrific day. I, like most Ameri-

cans, like Congress, wake up every morning feeling safe, proceed with my day without even worrying about the threat of an attack because I know that from law enforcement to our national security apparatus, thousands of highly trained professionals are diligently watching and working and protecting.

Men and women using the latest technologies and a lot of muscle are hard at work around the clock making sure that those that want to hurt us are kept away.

I hope everyone understands that the desire of the terrorist organizations to launch a deadly attack has not subsided. It is their mission to attack and destroy us, to attack and destroy our way of life. But what has changed is that our ability to thwart attacks has dramatically increased.

The latest in database technology, coupled with surveillance technologies, is proving to be a powerful force in identifying those potential attackers who want to kill us. We owe a great deal of gratitude to these men and women on the front lines of our defense.

Just this past week the media reported that some 200,000 people across the globe are on our watchlist, persons that we have reason to believe wish to do us harm, but most importantly, 200,000 people we have already identified as potential threats. And when you know who your enemy is, you have got a better chance at seeing them come at you.

When we wake up each morning and turn on our television sets and there is no news of an attack, we do not even think that there might have been one. That, in itself, is a tribute to the hard work of our national security team. We go about our lives without fear of another attack because of the job they are doing each and every minute of each and every day for us. And that means we must give them every tool needed to complete their mission.

Their mission is not only important, it is a matter of life and death. Our life and death. My life and death. Your life and death, Mr. Speaker.

Much has been said about the National Security Agency's surveillance program in the media. Much of it is nonsense and distortion, and I am so glad we have the Official Truth Squad here tonight to talk about that.

I asked my constituents in a recent survey what they thought about the National Security Agency's surveillance program. Over 2,000 people have responded to date. Slightly less than 80 percent support the program.

Mr. Speaker, 80 percent is a huge number. That is a supermajority of folks, folks like you and me representing all kind of ideologies and political affiliations. Eighty percent want the NSA to continue to do their job so you and I can remain free from terrorist attacks.

The American people, first and foremost, want to be safe in their homes

and go about their lives without that fear again of another 9/11. They exhibit far more common sense than the media ever gives them credit for.

One of our colleagues from the great State of Texas has a great saying that Texas could use a whole lot less of Washington and Washington could use a whole lot more of Texas. I agree. Unfortunately, some day I hope in the very, very far, distant future we may well again be attacked. That attack may well be much larger in scope than 9/11 ever hoped to be. And on that day I hope and I pray that we can all say we did everything in our power we could do to prevent it. That is our responsibility. Do you not agree?

It is our responsibility to give this agency the tools necessary to protect the American people from another terrorist attack. I am glad we are giving them those tools.

It is our responsibility to see that they continue to have them so that you and I can wake up once again tomorrow morning in the freest nation in the world, free to be able to go about doing our business without fear of an enemy knocking at our door.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Thank you so much, Congresswoman SCHMIDT. I appreciate you coming and joining us tonight. Your stories are always spell-binding and very moving.

And the story that you tell of your experience with your daughter on that fateful day is chilling. It brings back all the memories that all of us have and how thankful we all should be, are, can be of the incredible job that the first responders are doing all across this Nation, all across this Nation. So I thank you very much for coming and being with us.

One of the privileges that we have, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, is to gain certain information, to be briefed on certain things that are happening around the world and certain activities that the American Government and American Defense Department are doing. Some of those things we can share, some of them we cannot share, but what I can share with the American people is this certainty.

The fact that since 9/11 we have not had a major terrorist attack on the United States is not a mistake. It is not a mistake. It is not just by chance that we have, as Congresswoman SCHMIDT said, been able to awaken each morning and not really think about the possibility that it might happen again.

There are men and women all across this Nation who are performing heroic tasks day in and day out, and we all should be incredibly grateful and appreciative of their efforts.

I was pleased also to hear Congresswoman SCHMIDT bring up the NSA domestic terrorist surveillance project that is ongoing, a project that has been denigrated by many folks, a project that is frankly having an incredible effect on our national security and our ability to protect ourselves. It is a pro-

gram that was put in place by the President and the National Security Agency. And Congress, the appropriate individuals in Congress, were informed, were in the loop, were given information, were told about it; and now some have kind of changed that story.

But when it came to light in the public and there were discussions about whether or not it was the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do, it appeared to me that it was one of those issues that, as Congresswoman SCHMIDT said, our constituents believed in strongly. So I started asking.

I hold a lot of town hall meetings, and I do a lot of speaking to a lot of groups back home, and when I do I oftentimes ask them. I said, if you had the opportunity as a nation, as the American Government, to know where terrorists were in terms of the use of a phone line, if you could know that and you were able to detect when they were making a telephone call from their home or from their cell phone into the United States, would you want to know what was going on in that conversation?

Mr. Speaker, I promise you I have not had a single soul tell me that they do not think that that is what the government ought to be doing. In fact, what they say is, if we were not doing that, if we were not doing that, then we would not be living up to our responsibilities that we have as a government to do probably the most important thing that we do day in and day out as a Federal Government, and that is to protect our homeland, to provide national security.

So I am certain that the support that we see for this program is universal around the Nation. And we are not talking about listening into an American citizen call to an American citizen call domestically. Remember what we are talking about. We are talking about known terrorist cells, known terrorist phone numbers, a known terrorist identity having communication with someone in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that we have the capability to detect that kind of communication, and I believe strongly, strongly, that my constituents, what they tell me is consistent with what folks believe around the Nation; and that is that we ought to continue that program and we ought to make certain that we are doing what we can do to protect our homeland.

We have also the opportunity so many times to hear from world leaders, and today was a day that I will not forget very soon. We had the Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, come and he gave an address to a joint session of Congress. I was incredibly struck by so many of the comments that he made. And thank goodness they gave me a translation because my Italian is not very good. But I wanted to highlight a couple of the things that he said, because it just rings so true, and it talks about the incredible importance of what we as a Nation are

doing, having done, and are doing now around the world.

□ 1830

So here are a couple of quotes from Prime Minister Berlusconi that he gave before Congress today. He said, Today, I am still grateful to the United States for the high price in lives you continue to pay in the fight against terrorism to assure our common security and defend human rights around the world. As I will never tire of repeating, when I see your flag, I do not merely see the flag of a great country. Above all, I see a symbol, a universal symbol, of democracy and freedom.

What an incredible picture he draws of what I feel in my heart and I know that so many of my constituents feel about the symbol of our Nation and about the incredibly important work that we are doing as a Nation. To have a leader of another country stand up and say proudly that he believes strongly in the work that the United States is doing to fight terrorism and to commit once again his nation to that fight was just incredibly inspiring.

Prime Minister Berlusconi also said, History has shown that the aspiration to democracy is universal and that liberty and democracy are contagious.

It is just a reaffirmation of what we have talked about for the past number of years and how important this war on terrorism is and how important it is to plant the seeds of democracy around the world. This is what we are doing, and what that does is make it so that we as a Nation are more secure. We are not only more free, but we are more secure as democracy moves around the world.

Here are a couple of other quotes from the Prime Minister. He stood here just in this Chamber today and said, Only democracy can provide liberty and only liberty can guarantee that individuals will be able to develop their talents, channel their energies, achieve their dreams, and conquer prosperity. The only possible road is to work together to spread democracy.

Is that not an inspiring message from another world leader? The only possible road is to work together to spread democracy.

This is the final portion of his speech that I would like to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and with the Members once again of the House and frankly with our citizens. This was incredibly moving. Many of us had tears in our eyes as he closed, and he said, Allow me to conclude by sharing with you a brief story. It is the story of a young man who had just graduated from high school. His father took him to a cemetery that was the final resting place for brave young soldiers, young people who had crossed an ocean to restore dignity and liberty to an oppressed people. In showing him those crosses, that father made his son vow never to forget the ultimate sacrifice those young American soldiers made for his freedom. That father made his son vow eternal

gratitude to that country. The Prime Minister said, That father was my father and that young man was me. I have never forgotten that sacrifice and that vow and I never will.

Incredible words from a world leader, who draws us a picture of a time 60 years ago, 50 years ago, when his father took him to a cemetery filled with American soldiers who had fought for his freedom. He tells us that he was asked by his father never to forget that sacrifice, and he vowed that he never would.

The seeds of liberty, the seeds of freedom, the seeds of democracy that we plant around the world, we may never know when we will see the fruit of that planting. I wonder myself today whether there is an Iraqi man and an Iraqi woman who are telling similar stories to their sons and their daughters and that in 30 or 40 years we would be honored and privileged to have the Prime Minister or the President of a free Iraq come before the United States House of Representatives and tell that same story, as how they were inspired by their mom or their dad as they recognize the sacrifice that American soldiers made on their behalf. An incredible, incredible picture in words.

I had the opportunity to speak to an American Legion group at home a number of weeks ago, and then another American Legion chapter came and visited my office just the other day. I was struck by something that they said. The American Legion's motto is, "For God and country," and it is an appropriate motto: "For God and country."

There is an American Legion division that was supposed to go to an elementary school, a public elementary school in our Nation and tell the young folks at the elementary school about the American Legion, about the history and their heritage. They were called a couple of days before their visit, and they were told, no, we cannot have you come; we have been threatened with a lawsuit because of your motto, "For God and country."

Mr. Speaker, I am just struck by the incredible diligence of all the men and women who fight for our national security, all of the men and women who have fought for our national security, and they recognize over and over and over again that freedom is not free, that there is a price to pay.

Then I am struck by so many individuals it appears that want to destroy the roots that we have that brought about our national security and about our freedom, and I just appreciate so much the opportunity to stand before the House of Representatives as a member of the Official Truth Squad and bring these stories to try to invigorate and uplift the American people to be proud of our heritage, to be proud of the men and women who are serving us so remarkably around the Nation and around the world.

I am pleased now to be joined by a colleague, Congressman STEVE PEARCE,

who is coming and participating with the Official Truth Squad this evening, to talk about our national security, homeland security and bringing some truth and honesty to the debate that we have here in the United States House of Representatives. I am pleased to yield to Congressman PEARCE.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I think your conversation is exactly correct, that right now in America, when I visit the troops in Iraq, the young men and women there ask me one question that I cannot answer, and that is, they ask how come my parents do not see the good things that I am doing on TV at night. How come they only see the bad things? Why is the press trying to mislead the public?

So I appreciate your truth squad here where you begin to talk about the magnificent things that our troops are doing because, when I am there, our troops tell us that we are winning in the neighborhoods and the hearts of the Iraqi people and the hearts of people who distrusted us.

I had three young men there from New Mexico. They call themselves the Three Amigos. They were telling me, when we were out on patrol the first days that we were there, and this was way back at the beginning of the war, they said that the people would peek out their window and open the window curtain and take a look out. The next week, maybe the window curtain was pulled open, the door still locked, the windows down. Gradually, the door opened up, and they would let their kids stand in the door and look at the Americans.

Then they talked about the thing that I found in the Philippines when I was in the Air Force flying into Vietnam when you walk out among kids, and Asia and kids in other parts of the country, the thing they want to do is they want to touch the hair on your arm. So these young troops are saying, you know, the strangest things, the kids came out and the moms are holding them up to our face where the kids can see. They want to touch the hair on our arm. It was exactly the same thing I had experienced back in 1971, 1972, and 1973.

It brings down to me the fact that these Iraqis had been told for 35 years that the Americans will kill you. The truth is Saddam Hussein would kill them. He was always telling them an untruth; and when the truth was known, then the Iraqi people began to settle down.

I would say also that, in this country, if there is a big issue today, one we as a Nation face, it is truth. It is the understanding of what objective truth is. It is the understanding of who can tell us and who will tell us the truth. So I appreciate the gentleman's efforts to bring some truth to this floor because often we have got our friends who come and they talk about special interests and are pointing at the other team. The truth is, the biggest special

interest group in this body are the trial lawyers, and the biggest special interest group in the other body are trial lawyers. They are the ones that are getting the most influence here. Yet our friends seem to forget that they are a special interest group and they are causing great outcomes in legislation.

So I appreciate the gentleman's efforts to bring truth to the floor of the House of Representatives and especially as it regards our troops because our troops are doing magnificent things as they are in harm's way every day. We as a grateful Nation should always take the time to say thank you, not only to the troops but also to families of the troops, for being willing to be the last wedge between tyranny that originates in the Middle East and freedoms that we are trying to export from this country. I think that we owe all of our families and all of our troops a good round of thanks from a grateful Nation.

I salute the gentleman for his efforts.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman so much. I appreciate you bringing up truth again.

The Official Truth Squad, we have got a quote that we oftentimes refer to that kind of gets to the heart of the matter. It is a quote from Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and what he said is that everyone's entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts. So I appreciate so much you bringing truth to the fore, and there are some facts that oftentimes get distorted.

One of them is that people talk about the decrease or the cuts in the defense budget, in the military budget and how on Earth can you continue as we are doing right now by cutting those folks that are protecting us. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the numbers, there are not any cuts at all, and there are not any cuts appropriately because we are in the time that we are in right now and the budgetary authority, which means the amount of money that is able to be appropriated to the military in 2000, was \$287 billion; in the next year, 2001, \$303 billion. It does not look like a cut to me: 2002, \$328 billion, and you see as we go out 2003, \$365 billion; the following year, \$376 billion; and 2005, 2006, \$411 billion.

Now, the truth of the matter is that that budget is appropriately increasing in spite of what you hear from the other side; and, in fact, you hear oftentimes some claims from folks on the other side of the aisle who say that we are not making any progress in national security, we are not making any progress in Iraq. I am always fond of bringing charts and pictures because I think that they speak so much louder than words.

This one is a phenomenal one. We are transitioning in Iraq, in the political environment, in the economic environment and in the military environment; and one of the transitions that is occurring is the transition of force levels of the Iraqi Army. What they are doing is momentous work over there.

In fact, what this chart shows is that in August of 2004 there were only five Iraqi battalions in combat, and you see the steady continual increase, and what many folks will not tell you is that in January of 2006, just a little over a month ago, 98 Iraqi Army battalions in combat.

What does that mean? That means that American soldiers, American men and women who have been serving in this war on terror and protecting your freedom and mine, can begin to come home. That is what that means. So we are making progress along those lines.

To give some other identity to the kinds of progress that is being made over there, this is the statistic that I just mentioned in August of 2004, only a handful of Iraqi Army battalions were in the fight. Now there are nearly 100, but it goes on.

In July of 2004, there were no operational army division brigade headquarters in Iraq, and today, eight brigade headquarters. Thirty-seven battalions have assumed battle space.

In July 2004, a little under 2 years ago, there were no operational special police, commando, public order, mechanized police or emergency response units. Under the Ministry of the Interior in Iraq, not one, not any of them; and in less than 2 years, today, there are 28 such battalions in the battle.

November 2004, there were about 115,000 trained and equipped Iraqi security forces. Today, over 227,000, nearly a quarter of a million trained and equipped security forces and others, if you talk about local police, individuals.

□ 1845

And the experience and the ability of the Iraqi forces has increased remarkably. In December of last year, 2 months ago, the Iraqi armed forces had more independent operations than did coalition forces. Mr. Speaker, did you hear that: more independent operations by the Iraqi forces than coalition forces. Remarkable.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have a couple other folks join me; and fellow Georgian, Congressman KINGSTON, who has such great insight into national security and great service here in the House of Representatives, is here; and I appreciate his coming down.

Mr. KINGSTON. Thank you, Mr. PRICE. I just wanted to say that I have the honor of representing the 3rd Infantry Division in Hinesville, Georgia, and in Savannah, Georgia, as well as the 1st Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment, and in all maybe as high as 20,000 troops from my district who have been in Iraq, the 48th Brigade, some coming and some going. But the thing that struck me as I went to Iraq in December is the amount of the turf, as you have mentioned, which has already been ceded to Iraqi security patrol.

When we were there, 50 percent of Baghdad was already under Iraqi control. And last week, I had the honor of

meeting with General Webster, who was in charge of the 3rd Infantry Division over there, he just got back, and he told me that number now in Baghdad is about 60 percent. In Mosul, 25 to 30 percent of it is under Iraqi security patrol. And the government of Mosul, interestingly enough, is headed by a mayor who is a Sunni, and he has suffered personally. His family has been attacked because of it. Yet, at the same time, here is a guy who is still facing the wind and saying, let's get the job done, and not turning back.

One of the things I know you and I have heard from folks in Iraq and in Afghanistan is, we want to know is America here to stay until we are up and running. I know there are a lot of Democrats who would like to pull out tomorrow, and I understand that. I wish all our troops were home from everywhere. But the message that we got from the folks over there is, we really appreciate what you are doing; we need you to stay until the job is done.

And then as I have talked to the 3rd Infantry soldiers, it is the same thing: we have to finish this job. We just can't faint in the face of adversity. There are so many in America, the Michael Moores, the Cindy Sheehans, the fringe branch of the liberals that want us to cut and run. I think that would be such a huge disservice to all the troops who have died.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. If the gentleman would yield back to me for a moment, I think it is important to note that there are some in this Chamber who want to do just that, who say to pull out immediately. But as we both know, and our constituents and citizens around the Nation know, that is not feasible nor is it advisable.

What is at stake, and I was telling the Members earlier, the Italian Prime Minister today really clearly defined what is at stake: if we as a free people in this world are able to plant liberty and democracy around the world, we increase our security. We increase our security.

And I know that the gentleman would concur with that.

Mr. KINGSTON. That is a message we hear from all over, particularly new Europe, emerging Europe, the Europe that had been 50 years under the Soviet bloc. They understand freedom, and they understand oppression. They do not take it for granted. They are not so anti-American as the Germans and the French seem to be. They do not enjoy the U.S. kicking that so many of our fair weather friends over there do.

But along with military progress in Iraq, there has been tremendous economic progress. As I was there looking down from the helicopter over the streets of Baghdad, I saw small businesses, traffic jams, people moving in and out of buildings buying things and so forth.

There is a port in Iraq that under Saddam Hussein never was used. Today, it has 40 ships a month going into it. In terms of newspapers and

banking, it is coming back. In 2003, there were 13 Iraqi companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Today, I think that number is somewhere between 60 and 80. That is a lot of progress.

The GDP last year, I think, was something like \$15 billion. Today it is \$29 billion. A very small economy, but that is a huge step. The unemployment rate was something like 70 percent, and it is now 26 percent. Still very high unemployment rate by our standards, but for the Middle East, pretty doggone good. I can tell you that the Palestinian Authority wishes their unemployment rate were that low.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. It is great that you are able to share those statistics, because what they do is show and demonstrate to the American people that in fact there is a plan and there is progress.

We hear some of our friends on the other side saying there is no plan, nothing is happening over there that is making any progress. But the three-prong plan that you know about well is: one, military, which we have talked about; the other, economic, that you have so clearly identified with the increase in GDP, a 100 percent increase in their economy, the decrease in their unemployment, which is cut by two-thirds, which is remarkable in terms of the progress there; and then there's the third arm, which is the political arm. And what we have seen, what the world has seen over the past year are three independent elections, each with growing participation by the Iraqi people. They understand what is at stake. They understand what is at stake.

So for anybody to even have any sensibility about saying that there just isn't a plan or has not been any progress, just doesn't make sense to me.

Mr. KINGSTON. There is one Sunni province that went from something like a 2 percent voter turnout in January 2005 to December 15, 2005, having over a 60 percent voter turnout. Lots of people risking lives to go to the polls and very enthusiastic about it. When you think about the 300 political parties, when here we worry about Democrats versus Republicans, but 300 different political parties electing 275 members of a new parliament to serve now for 4-year terms, it is going to take awhile to have a coalition government put together. Usually those things take two or three months to happen.

But what I saw when I was over there is people wanting to put down the gun and pick up the pencil and pick up the paper and say let's move from the battlefield to the legislative chamber and debate this.

There are so many challenges to starting a new nation, but what they need right now is the world community behind them. They do not need world criticism behind them. I think sometimes our disagreements with the administration's foreign policy has led us

to be anti-Iraqi people, and I do not think the critics of the administration intend it to be that way, but that is the way it comes out overseas.

So I think we have to say, you know, Democrats and Republicans, and Republicans versus Republicans, can disagree on our foreign policy in Iraq and the war on terrorism; but we have to stand behind the Iraqi people. It is in everyone's interest for Iraq to succeed. And this is the point we are at. We cannot go back and say, well, this is what we should have done in 2003, this is what we should have done here and there. You have to take the situation as it is today and from this point on how are we going to move through the future.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Without a doubt. I am so glad you joined us to talk about this, because that is what the Official Truth Squad is all about, bringing to light the truth of issues, but also understanding and appreciating and articulating what our constituents know, and that is that these challenges are not Republican challenges or Democrat challenges; they are American challenges. They are challenges we all have to face together.

I know the gentleman joins me in just calling on our colleagues to step up, to recognize that the Iraqi people need our support now more than ever before, and to recognize that we have a lot of hurdles, a lot of challenges, but together we can overcome them, as can they.

I appreciate the gentleman's participation tonight and his expertise and perspective to the Official Truth Squad.

Mr. KINGSTON. Well, I appreciate being with you.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, we have been joined by another great colleague, a gentleman from Texas, another member of the freshman class and a great fellow who has participated in many of these Official Truth Squad activities, Congressman LOUIE GOHMERT, a former judge and chief justice of the court of appeals in Texas. He has just great experience with this area of the history of national security, and he comes tonight to share some of his thoughts with us.

Congressman GOHMERT.

Mr. GOHMERT. Well, it is refreshing to hear about good things going on in Iraq. Of course, we know that some have been concerned a civil war may be breaking out over there, but the truth is what this boils down to is they have been finding with the IEDs, these explosive devices that have been killing now both Iraqis and Americans, that that hasn't worked. They have seen we have a President with firm resolve; that we are going to stay the course and make sure the country is ready to stand on its own and then let her stand.

So they realized they were not being successful in that regard, so a last-ditch effort you have terrorists from other areas coming in and blowing up

their own precious mosques to try to turn Shi'a against Sunni. It is obvious that this is a last-ditch effort to try to divide the country, because it scares a lot of folks over there greatly to think about a democracy succeeding right in the heart of the Middle East. I mean, that could spread to Iran. Boy, that scares Iran. It could spread to Syria. There are a number of countries over there that it scares them because democracy, as the President has said, could change things, and those folks are right on each other's borders.

If I could take you back to 1973, between my sophomore and junior year in college, I was an exchange student in the former Soviet Union. Back then we didn't call it the former Soviet Union, it was the Soviet Union, and I spent a summer there and associated with and dealt with college students there in Ukraine, where I was. And I developed a number of friends, one of whom was an engineering student, a smart guy. He spoke a little better English than I did Russian. Well, a lot better English than I did Russian.

We had some wonderful conversations. Very frank, very honest discussions. And at one point he was saying, you Americans seem to not understand why we would cling to communism, but it is the best thing we have ever had. We have had two major wars on our own soil and we have had to divert most everything to defense just to protect ourselves. As he pointed out, you, on the other hand, you have got two major oceans protecting the east and the west.

Think about that. That is profound. And that is something that will be written about the United States hundreds of years from now when someone writes about the rise and fall of the greatest Nation in the history of the world, that we had two major oceans. Now, I would say that is a blessing from God. That is what has allowed this Nation to be nourished and to grow without much threat of intervention from other countries because they had to cross two major oceans to get here.

The thing that concerns me is finding out we are potentially allowing footholds on our own soil. We are giving up an advantage. I didn't realize we had other foreign countries managing, leasing, utilizing avenues of entry in our ports. But now we have one transaction that is up right now with the UAE, the United Arab Emirates. As some have pointed out, the UAE has been our friend since 9/11, and that is interesting in and of itself; but there is a transaction in question that has stirred up much of America, for them to purchase or lease terminals at six of our ports. So I think it bears looking into.

If this goes through, of course they would be handling shipping arrivals, departures, unloading at the dock, and other security sensitive functions. Yes, we would still have our Coast Guard. Yes, we would still have American Customs at work. Some of us are aware

that they do not always catch everything. We are a little sarcastic sometimes in Texas. But they may have containers sitting on their docks for a number of days. They will necessarily be aware of the manner in which our government inspects containers, how it selects the maybe 5 to 6 percent that it actually x-rays, how it goes about selecting which container will be one of the maybe 1 percent that they actually examine.

The current administration has looked at the issue and seems surprised that Americans are really upset about the issue.

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And I want to say about this President, he is the first President in at least 30 years to take seriously the threat of a foreign government. I know I was in the United States Army at Fort Benning, Georgia, back when the United States soil was attacked and Americans were taken hostage. That is an act of war. Under international law, you attack somebody's embassy, as ours was attacked in Iran, it is an act of war and it justifies defending yourself. And we did nothing. We begged them to let them go.

And then later, because of a lack of leadership here in Washington, there was a failed rescue attempt that embarrassed us even further. But it sent a message that perhaps we do not have the stomach, we cannot handle these things. Perhaps if we had had an administration in Washington 30 years ago that took care of business when we were attacked, we would not be worrying about these issues now. But it did not and so we do.

Some say, well, since the UAE is one of three nations to have recognized the Taliban as an official government, that that gives them concern, as it should. There are indications that the UAE also saw an opportunity for making money, and so apparently there were al Qaeda moneys that flowed through UAE systems.

But this administration has done more to fight terrorism abroad than any perhaps in history. This terrorism is a relatively new phenomenon for our young country. But we have not done so well at home. And so it bears looking at even more closely.

We need legal immigration. We need people legally coming across the border, willing to work. Most all of us were a result of immigrants, even being here. It is a good thing, if you are willing to work. But we need to secure our borders so terrorists do not come in.

Now, since there is a war going on near our U.S. border, at our U.S. border, and some of us believe there have been insufficient efforts by the Federal Government to intervene and help our sheriffs and those that are trying to fight that war, it gets even more critical.

I personally do not believe that this great Nation should be contracting out any rights to manage, operate, use,

own any avenue of entry into the U.S., whether it is an airport, whether it is a bridge across our border, whether it is a road across our border, or whether it is a terminal in our seaports. That is just problematic.

Now, the UAE has been our friend. They have been helpful to us in the war on terror, and we do want them as an ally. And I hope and pray we have a longstanding relationship with them that just brings us closer.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GOHMERT. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I appreciate the gentleman's comments about the Dubai ports deal, because I know that you have received a lot of communication from home and I have as well. I tell you, it is one of those lightning rod issues that really people have this visceral reaction that we just ought not to be allowing a foreign government to have some type of operational control over our ports. And I tell you—and I could not agree more.

But I will tell you what I think is the wonder and the beauty of our system of government is that what we have is congressional oversight that allows us to get together, we did so just today in the Financial Services Committee, and ask the administration what, how did you reach that decision? Did we touch all the bases? Did we do all the right steps? Did we make all the right steps? The Senate has done the same thing and we will move through this process.

And so I am heartened by a system of government that has checks and balances, that you and I serve in one of those branches, and it allows us to move forward and make certain that we understand what our constituents understand and that the administration understands what our constituents understand, and that is that port security is border security and border security is necessary for national security.

So I appreciate you bringing that issue up.

Mr. GOHMERT. Will the gentleman yield back?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Please.

Mr. GOHMERT. This is also part of an important process. Some people say, why would you come down and talk for an hour on the floor of the House? It is part of educating our colleagues with information we have gleaned in preparing to come here. It is part of educating the people that would bother to watch this on television. And we have picked up some facts. And it is important people understand there are changing relationships, one of the things that concerns us when we have a contract that deals with an avenue of entry into this country with a foreign country.

After World War II, we had no better friend than France. They knew that they had their freedom, they got their country back over the graves of the brave men and women of the United States and other countries, they got it back for them. Our Americans died.

Now, it hasn't been too many years later they have forgotten all about that. Now they call us imperialists. And I get a chuckle when I hear somebody from France saying we are imperialists, because if we really were, they would not be speaking French over there in their country right now, and they would not be running their own country and they would not be calling us names now.

But anyway, they are. But it just shows an example of how things change with other countries, even some that have been dear friends.

And I wanted to point out something else that we learned that helps people assess how close the UAE actually looks at issues like we do. So I went back, I think not only do words have meaning, but votes have meaning; and I have a bill pending that we have filed, the U.N. Voting Accountability Act, and we have got a lot of Republicans, I know, supporting us. I do not know that I have Democrats supporting us. But it basically says any country that voted against us more than half the time in the U.N. the preceding year gets no financial assistance this year. And then it gives the exception for national security, but to the President.

But that caused me to say, well, I wonder how the UAE has voted in the U.N.? Well, I went back and looked. My staff has done a great job helping out. In 2002, the year after 9/11, there were 90 votes in the U.N. Of those, the UAE voted against our position 61 times, with our position, 13 times, abstained 13 times and was absent 3 times. Now, not exactly a real good, helpful voting record for the U.S.

But in 2003, there were 85 votes in the U.N. UAE voted against our position 66 times, with our position they agreed 8 times, abstained 9 times and were absent 2 times. Then I went ahead and put these up.

We do not have 2005 records; those will come out from the U.N. on March 31, according to their own rules. But in 2004, the UAE, well, there were 79 votes in the U.N. in 2004. They voted with the United States 5 times. Oh, good friend, yeah. And then against the United States 62 times, abstained 10 times and were absent 2 times.

So I think those are telling. And I think it is part of the democratic process that as Republicans we feel an obligation, I know I do, to come down and educate people on what it is we are looking back at.

We know no government lasts forever. I know I left the bench because having three daughters, I just could not leave this world without trying to leave this country better than it was when we found it.

I do not want to leave a country that is not secure.

I do not want to leave a country that is overly in debt. And those are reasons, I know we have talked before with my good friend from Georgia, these are things we hold dear that are important to us. And I want to make

sure that in the 100, 200, 300, whoever knows how many years from now when somebody writes *The Rise and Fall of the Greatest Nation on Earth*, it does not fall to us that we let things slip by giving people who may have liked us at one time a foothold on our soil that elevated into something that hurt us down the road.

One other parenthetical. Of course, as an old judge, I am concerned about due process. And I heard the gentleman from Georgia talking about eavesdropping on foreigners calling in here. We know terrorists. By golly, if a terrorist is calling the United States, we need to know what they are saying.

But on the other hand, when you look at due process within the United States, it has been so critical, it is so important to us. If you do not secure the borders and keep out people that want to come in and hurt you, then you are necessarily going to have give up due process rights within the United States to protect yourself and stay secure.

I do not want to do that. I want to secure all our avenues of entry and make sure we do not give up due process rights.

Of course, if you are a terrorist trying to phone home or phone into our home from your home where you hate us, then look out. We are going to be watching.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank the gentleman from Texas so very, very much for enlightening us. And I think the take-home message here is that port security is border security and border security is national security. And that is something I think that the American people understand very, very clearly.

And I appreciate you bringing the information about the U.N. votes. We have got, if you look at it, in fact, there are not many nations on the face of the Earth that support us as we would like them to in the United Nations, and we look forward to bringing that information to light.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be a part of the Official Truth Squad, a group that comes down here almost every night and tries to bring some positive information about the United States, who tries to shed light on issues that are so often distorted here in the House Chamber.

The most important thing is, I think, that we all are truly blessed to live in this wondrous Nation. This is a nation that has given more freedom and more liberty and more prosperity to more individuals on the face of the Earth than any Nation in the history of mankind; and it is our privilege, it is our privilege to represent a portion of that Nation here in the House of Representatives.

I once again appreciate the opportunity to share some thoughts with my colleagues here in the House, and look forward to coming back at some point in the future. And I yield back the balance of my time.