

billion has been used inappropriately of Iraqi reconstruction funds that we appropriated. It is unaccounted for, according to the Inspector General in Iraq. There are 50 investigations going on. A Halliburton subsidiary just acknowledged, admitted, that they overcharged the government by \$63 million for a contract.

We need a Truman Committee-type investigation. It saved the American taxpayer tens of billions of dollars in the 1940's. It was rejected in the full committee, but it should be made part of this bill.

Now another major part of this bill deals with Hurricane Katrina. I was just down there in Louisiana, Mr. Chairman, on my own tab, for what it is worth what I learned about the contracting process down there is just stunning. It makes you wonder whether we should be providing any money unless we can get a handle over the way the money is spent.

Let me give you a thinly-veiled hypothetical example. One contract, for example, we give it to a prime contractor to fix roofs for \$25,000 a roof. Eighty percent of it goes to a subcontractor, then 60 percent to another subcontractor, to another subcontractor, and, finally, it gets down to a company that actually puts the roof on for \$1,200 a roof. You do the math, Mr. Chairman. Virtually all of the money goes to these contractors who never banged a hammer on a nail, and you know how we found out about it? Because the actual undocumented aliens who did the work contacted a FEMA person on the field, wondering how they were going to get paid. You go figure, Mr. Chairman.

Another contract went for debris removal, prime contractor, subcontractor, down again through reiterations, finally goes to the company that is already doing the very work for the City of New Orleans for a fraction of the cost but they never saw 90 percent of the money. These are things a Truman Committee could look into and fix.

Beyond the need for more oversight on the contracting process of the Federal Government, Mr. Chairman, we have some other issues that should have been part of this bill. The members of the full committee in the last omnibus appropriations conference had put the bill to bed, finished it up, when the majority leader of the Senate came over and added 45 pages providing liability exemption for drug companies.

□ 1245

We wanted to rectify that by striking the language we never approved. That was not done.

The third issue that we debated in full committee, and unfortunately it lost, was to give Medicare recipients an extra 7 months within which to make a decision as to whether to participate in Medicare part D. If Medicare senior citizens don't sign up by May 15, they have to then wait for another 7 months

and they will pay an extra 1 percent a month. That means there will be a tax, if you will, a penalty of 7 percent for the rest of their lives applied to their insurance premiums.

It is too confusing a program. They need more time to decide. We ought to give them another 7-month extension so that they can make that decision by the end of this calendar year. If we don't ten million seniors will pay this penalty for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Chairman, there are so many other issues in this bill that we could discuss. Some of them will be discussed. But the bottom line is that it is an awful lot of money. It is the largest supplemental we have ever passed in this body. The largest appropriation as a supplemental ever considered. We have to provide it, but we ought to show more scrutiny towards the way the money is being spent.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, there is a provision here with regard to Dubai Ports World attempted purchase of American ports. I know I am in the distinct minority. It was a 62-2 vote, and I was one of the two that opposed this language. We have to identify our friends, and Dubai is our friend. The fact is that the Homeland Security Secretary said if this deal goes through it will strengthen port security, yet we ignore that information as well as the reality of the fact that Dubai is doing everything to be a bridge to the moderate Arab world. We blew up that bridge in committee, as far as I am concerned, Mr. Chairman, and I would hope we will try to rectify some of that damage.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) having assumed the chair, Mr. GILLMOR, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4939) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair desires to make an announcement.

After consultation with the Speaker, the majority and minority leaders, the Chair announces that during the joint meeting to hear an address by her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, only the doors immediately opposite the Speaker and those on his right and left will be open.

No one will be allowed on the floor of the House who does not have the privilege of the floor of the House.

Due to the large attendance which is anticipated, the Chair feels the rule re-

garding the privilege of the floor must be strictly adhered to.

Children of Members will not be permitted on the floor, and the cooperation of all Members is requested. The practice of reserving seats prior to the joint meeting by placard will not be allowed. Members may reserve their seats by physical presence only following the security sweep of the Chamber.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of Thursday, March 9, 2006, the House stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 49 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

During the recess, beginning at about 1:50 p.m. the following proceedings were had:

□ 1350

JOINT MEETING OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE TO HEAR AN ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

The Speaker of the House presided.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms, Bill Sims, announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of the Republic of Liberia, into the Chamber:

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER);

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM);

The gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN);

The gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY);

The gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH);

The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN);

The gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE);

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH);

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON);

The gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE);

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI);

The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN);

The gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS);

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE);

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS);

The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT);

The gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY);

The gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. KILPATRICK);

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE); and

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON).

The VICE PRESIDENT. The President of the Senate, at the direction of that body, appoints the following Senators as members of the committee on the part of the Senate to escort Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of the Republic of Liberia, into the House Chamber:

The Senator from Tennessee (Mr. FRIST);

The Senator from Alaska (Mr. STEVENS);

The Senator from Indiana (Mr. LUGAR);

The Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN);

The Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD); and

The Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED).

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Roble Olhaye, Ambassador from the Republic of Djibouti.

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seat reserved for him.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The Members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 2 o'clock and 6 minutes p.m., the Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the President of Liberia, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

The President of Liberia, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and stood at the Clerk's desk.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, it is my great privilege and I deem it a high honor and a personal pleasure to present to you Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

President JOHNSON SIRLEAF. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of the United States Congress, and distinguished guests, I am deeply touched by the honor bestowed on my small but proud West African Republic of Liberia and on myself by inviting me to address this body of representatives of

the people of the great United States of America. By this invitation, you have paid one of the greatest tributes there is to all those who laid down their lives for my country to be free and democratic. I can only say a big thank you.

The people of Liberia and the people of the United States are bound together by history and by values. We share a deep and abiding belief in the power of freedom, of faith, and of finding virtue in work for the common good.

The national motto of Liberia, founded, as you know, by freed American slaves, is: "The love of liberty brought us here." We became the first independent republic in Africa. Our capital, Monrovia, is named for your President, James Monroe. Our flag is a star in a blue field and red and white stripes. Its one star makes us the "lone star state" in Africa. Our constitution and our laws were based upon yours. The U.S. dollar was long our legal tender and still is used alongside the Liberian dollar today.

But our ties greatly exceed the historical connection. I stand before you today as the first woman elected to lead an African nation, thanks to the grace of almighty God; thanks to the courage of the Liberian people, who chose their future over fear; thanks to the people of West Africa and of Africa generally, who continued to give hope to my people. Thanks also to President Bush whose strong resolve and public condemnation and appropriate action forced a tyrant into exile; and thanks to you, the Members of this august body, who spurred the international effort that brought blessed peace to our nation.

It was the leadership of the 108th Congress, more than 2 years ago, that paved the way for a United Nations force that secured our peace and guaranteed free and fair elections. It was your \$445 million addition to a supplemental appropriations bill that attracted additional commitments from international donors. With those funds, we have laid the foundation for a durable peace, not only in Liberia, but in the whole West African subregion. Special appreciation goes to the 109th Congress, those of you in this room, for the effort in recent weeks to meet Liberia's developing needs.

Honorable ladies and gentlemen of this Congress, I want to thank you. The Liberian people have sent me here to thank you for your vision. Our triumph over evil is also your triumph.

Our special relationship with the United States brought us benefits long before the autumn of 2003. Thousands of our people, including myself, have been educated in American missionary schools and gone on to higher training in this country. You have generously welcomed tens of thousands of our people as they fled war and persecution.

I was among them. In 1985, after challenging the military regime's failure to register my political party, I was put in jail with several university students

who also challenged military rule. This House came to our rescue with a resolution threatening to cut off aid to the country unless all political prisoners were freed. Months later, I was put in jail again, this time in a cell with 15 men. All of them were executed a few hours later. Only the intervention of a single soldier spared me from rape. Through the grace of almighty God and the mercy of others, I escaped and found refuge here, in Washington, D.C.

But long before that, our country and I benefited from Liberia's special relationship with the United States. My family exemplifies the economic and social divide that has torn our nation. Unlike many privileged Liberians, I can claim no American lineage. Three of my grandparents were indigenous Liberians; the fourth was a German who married a rural market woman. That grandfather was forced to leave the country when Liberia, in loyalty to the United States, declared war on Germany in 1914.

Both of my grandmothers were farmers and village traders. They could not read or write any language, as more than three-quarters of our people still cannot today; but they worked hard, they loved their country, they loved their families, and they believed in education. They inspired me then, and their memory motivates me now to serve my people, to sacrifice for the world and honestly serve humanity. I could not, I will not, I cannot betray their trust.

My parents were sent at a young age to Monrovia, where it was common for elite families to take in children from the countryside to perform domestic chores. They endured humiliations and indignities, but my mother was fortunate to be adopted by a kind woman, and both my parents were able through this system to go to school, a rarity at that time for poor people. My father even became the first native Liberian in the Liberian national legislature.

I was not born with the expectation of a university education from Harvard or being a World Bank officer or an Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations. When I was a small girl in the countryside, swimming and fishing with twine made from palm trees, no one would have picked me out as the future president of our country.

I graduated from the College of West Africa, a United Methodist high school. I waited tables to support my studies in the United States, college in Wisconsin and graduate school in Massachusetts. I went on to enjoy the benefits and advantages of a world-class education.

So my feet are in two worlds, the world of poor rural women with no respite from hardship, and the world of accomplished Liberian professionals, for whom the United States is a second and beloved home. I draw strength from both.

But most of our people have not been as fortunate as I was. Always poor and underdeveloped, Liberia is only now