

struggle against Islamic fascism, which is a real present danger to the future of the United States of America, to me, is almost unconscionable.

This is a struggle we are engaged in. This is a struggle for our time. It is one that I believe history will look back upon and suggest that we met the threat that would have fundamentally changed the future of the world, and we met it before it did so. We met it with strength, with determination, and we overcame the doubters, overcame those who would have rather cut and run. I am not for cutting and running when it comes to the future security of this country. I have patience because things that are difficult and meaningful take time. We have to give that time.

I suggest there are some things that we are finding out now. Another effort I have been working on in Iraq is the intelligence information we have been able to gather from the former regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. This has been a project that Congressman PETER HOEKSTRA, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, has been working on—and I have worked with him—to make sure these 48,000 boxes, containing roughly 2 million documents, are released to the American public and the world to determine what was the intelligence assessment and the activity level and, in particular, in Iraq with Saddam, and with his interaction with elements of al-Qaida or other terrorist organizations.

What we are finding is that some of the statements that have been made on the floor and statements that were made just as recently as March 19, 2006 by my colleague from Pennsylvania, Congressman JACK MURTHA, who said:

There was no terrorism in Iraq before we went there. None. There was no connection with al-Qaida. There was no connection with terrorism in Iraq itself.

Yet if we look at some of the documents that are being released by Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte—and, again, only a few hundred of the millions of documents have been released. As a caveat, while Congressman HOEKSTRA and I are excited about the fact that DNI decided to release these documents, the pace of the release is, let us say, unsatisfactory to this point.

We have, with the blogosphere, the Internet, the opportunity to put these documents out there and have almost instantaneously translated postings about what these documents contain.

During the time the Director of National Intelligence Negroponte has had these documents—this is 3 years ago—less than 2 percent of the documents have been translated. At this pace, my grandchildren may know what is in these documents.

We need to get these documents out. Mr. President, 600 over a little over a 2-week period is almost the same pace as translating with the people they had over in DNI Negroponte's shop. We need to get these documents out quicker. Why? Because if we look at

what is in these documents, there is important information in understanding the connection between Iraq and terrorist organizations and the threat we were facing, the potential threat we had talked about, which is the coordination between a country that had used chemical and biological weapons, was thought universally to have chemical and biological weapons, and terrorists who have expressed a direct desire to use those weapons and get access to them.

If we look at a report that was issued by the Pentagon Joint Forces Command translating and analyzing some of these documents, called the "Iraqi Perspectives," on page 54, they write: Beginning in 1994, the Fedayeen Saddam opened its own paramilitary training camps for volunteers—this is 9 years, by the way, before the Iraq war—graduating more than 7,200 "good men racing full with courage and enthusiasm" in the first year.

Mr. President, 7,200 in the first year, 1994.

Beginning in 1998, these camps began hosting "Arab volunteers from Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, 'the Gulf,' and Syria." Volunteers. I wonder why they would be volunteering to help Saddam. It is not clear, it says, from the available evidence where are all these non-Iraqi volunteers who were "sacrificing for the cause" went to ply their newfound skills. Before the summer of 2002, most volunteers went home upon the completion of training. They didn't stay in Iraq. They came for training from countries in the gulf regions, and they went home. Odd that they would be fighting for the cause which would, in that case, be Saddam, if they went home.

Before the summer of 2002, as I said, most volunteers went home upon completion of the training, but these camps were humming with frenzied activity in the months immediately prior to the war.

As late as January 2003, the volunteers participated in a special training event called the Heroes Attack.

Stephen Hayes, who deserves a tremendous amount of credit for his reporting on these documents in the Weekly Standard, has brought this issue to the forefront and has awakened Members of Congress, myself included, to the importance of discovering the content of these documents as well as some of the information contained in these documents.

He reminds us of the special significance of that training in 1998:

That is the same year that the U.N. weapons inspectors left Iraq for good; the same year a known al Qaeda operative visited Baghdad for 16 days in March; the same year the U.S. embassies were bombed in East Africa; the same year the U.S. bombed Baghdad in Operation Desert Fox; and, the same year Saddam wired \$150,000 to Jabir Salim, the former Iraqi Ambassador to the Czech Republic, and ordered him to recruit Islamic radicals to blow up the headquarters of Radio Free Europe.

What we have here is, again, information that I believe is vitally important

for the American public to see. I encourage Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte to step up the pace. Congressman HOEKSTRA and I have introduced legislation which would require just that: it would require the release of these documents and provides a way to do so.

We introduced this legislation prior to the decision to release these documents, but, again, I just make the point that the pace with which these documents are being released is inadequate. We need to continue to step that up, allow this information to get out for people to see, pro and con—all the information that is available to us. These are old documents. They are at least 3 years old; in some cases much more than that. The classified nature is specious, at best. We want to protect names, obviously, if there are reasons to protect certain names because of potential fallout from having their names released. If there are recipes for chemical weapons, fine. But the bottom line is most of this information should be released, can be released, and is not being released.

I assure my colleagues—and I think I can speak for Congressman HOEKSTRA in this regard—we will stay on this issue, and we will make sure all of this information is made available to the American public so we have a better understanding of what the situation was in Iraq prior to the war.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating members on both sides of the aisle on the Judiciary Committee for the fine work they did yesterday on the immigration bill. My expectation is that it will be coming to the floor soon.

I wish to echo some of the remarks that were made by my senior colleague from Illinois, Senator DICK DURBIN. I think everybody in this Chamber should be interested in a comprehensive immigration reform bill, one that takes seriously the security of our borders, one that takes seriously enforcing the hiring practices of employers, but also one that makes sure we are providing a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million to 12 million undocumented workers who are making enormous contributions to this country.

The bill that came out of the Judiciary Committee last night strikes the right balance. I believe it is a bill that is worthy of support on both sides of the aisle, and I am looking forward to participating in the debate on what I think will be one of the most important issues we face in the Senate.

LOBBYING REFORM

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I come to the Chamber today to address the ethics bill that has been pending before

the Senate for the past three weeks. It has now been exactly four months since Duke Cunningham resigned from the House after pleading guilty to bribery, tax evasion, and mail fraud charges. It has now been almost three months since Jack Abramoff pled guilty to defrauding Indian tribes.

In the aftermath of both guilty pleas, Members on both sides of the aisles in both Houses of Congress brought forward good proposals to change the culture that led to these scandals, and yet here we are on March 28th with a half-finished ethics bill in the Senate and even less in the House.

I know there are many important issues facing our country—health care, education, the war in Iraq, and, as I just mentioned, immigration—but it is equally important that we as Members of Congress consider how we are going to deal with the cloud of corruption that hangs over the Capitol and how that affects the issues which are important to the American people. For that reason, I sincerely hope the leadership of both parties will be able to reach an agreement to bring this bill back to the floor before our next recess.

The American people are tired of a Washington that is only open to those with the most cash and the right connections. They are tired of a political process where the vote you cast isn't as important as the favors you do. And they are tired of trusting us with their tax dollars when they see them spent on frivolous pet projects and corporate giveaways.

It is not a game that is new in this town. It is not particularly surprising to the public. People are not naive about the existence of corruption. They know it has worn the face of both Republicans and Democrats over the years. So the hope is that we could find a bipartisan solution to the problem.

Before the recess, we made some progress on the ethics bill. I was pleased to join with Senator DODD on an amendment to ban Members and staff from accepting meals from lobbyists. And when we get back to the bill, I will be joining Senators SANTORUM, McCAIN, LIEBERMAN, and FEINGOLD in offering an amendment to define the way we reimburse corporate jet travel. I would like to spend a few minutes talking about this amendment.

During the past 5 years, Members of Congress, Presidential candidates, and political parties have used the corporate jets of 286 companies a total of more than 2,100 times. Despite the fact that a single flight of these jets can cost tens of thousands of dollars, the average reimbursement rate has only been about \$1,700 per trip. So far, politicians have gotten away with this because current law only requires us to reimburse the cost of a first-class ticket on these charter flights, not the actual cost of operating the plane. But since we are usually the only passengers on the plane who don't work for the company, this rule is effectively giving us thousands of dollars in

unwarranted discounts. This has to change.

Let me say this to my colleagues: Although I discontinued the practice earlier this year, I have used corporate jets in the past. I know some of the other proponents of this amendment have done the same. I know how convenient these charters can be. I know that a lot of my colleagues, particularly those from large States, will oppose this rule change because it makes it significantly more difficult and costly to interact with their constituents who live in less populated parts of their States. So I am not unsympathetic to these concerns. There are many parts of Illinois in which there is no commercial air service.

But this isn't about our convenience. It is about our reputation as public servants who are here to work for the common voter, not the highest bidder. We all know that corporations are not allowing us to use their jets out of the kindness of their hearts. It is yet another way that lobbyists try to curry influence with lawmakers.

One lobbyist told USA Today about the advantages of allowing Members of Congress to use his jet. He said:

You can sit down and have a cocktail and talk casually about a matter, rather than rushing in between meetings on Capitol Hill.

A lobbyist for a telecommunications company is quoted as saying that providing a jet to a lawmaker "gives us an opportunity to form relationships, to have a long stretch of time to explain issues that are technical and complicated. If it wasn't useful, we wouldn't do it." The vast majority of the people we represent don't have the money to buy that access and form those relationships. They don't have the ability to fly us around on their private planes. In fact, they are having enough trouble paying the mortgage and their medical bills and their kids' college tuition. And they expect us to listen to their issues with the same concern we would any lobbyist or corporation with a jet.

I know that some say that legislation isn't really being discussed on these flights. But appearances matter. If we want to be serious about showing our constituents that we are fighting for them—and not just for the wealthy and powerful—we can't allow a small number of special interests to be subsidizing our travel.

If there isn't enough commercial air service in a state and there is a need to take a charter flight, then we should pay the full cost of the charter. If there is not enough money in our Senate travel accounts to cover these costs, then we should increase our travel budgets. What we shouldn't do is allow lobbyists to pick up the tab.

I know this may not be a popular amendment. I know many of my colleagues will be inconvenienced if it is adopted; I will be as well. But if we are serious about cleaning up the way we do business in Washington, it is an important step for us to take. I hope my

colleagues will do the right thing and support this amendment.

In closing, let me say it is obvious we are not going to be able to finish ethics reform today. I know Senator LOTT and Senator DODD are working diligently to try to get this bill back on the floor. I also am aware of the importance of the immigration bill that we are going to be considering for the next two weeks. But I have to insist that we bring this ethics and lobbying bill back to the floor as soon as practicable and that we get to work on getting a bill passed and sent over to the House. The American people expect us to take strong action to clean up the way we do business in this city. They have been waiting for a long time. It is time we got to work.

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

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

LOBBYING AND RULES REFORM

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, for the information of all of our colleagues, we should be getting some indication from our leadership soon as to when and how we will proceed on the lobbying and rules reform legislation. Of course, a major part of our time this week will necessarily be involved in considering the immigration reform legislation that was reported out of the Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan vote on Monday night. But I do think that we should go back to this very important issue also, which has been pending now for 3 weeks.

This is a bipartisan piece of legislation from two different committees. It is one of those rare but blessed occasions when Republican and Democrat, chairman and ranking members, can work together. Senator DODD and I worked together on this legislation, along with Senator FEINSTEIN and other Democrats, to shape the package that came out of the Rules Committee. Senator COLLINS, the chairman of the very important Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, was able to get legislation out of her committee working with Senator LIEBERMAN of Connecticut. Good work is being done. We were making progress and were about to get into a position where we could have wrapped the legislation up in a couple of days.

However, Senator SCHUMER proposed an amendment involving the Dubai World ports issue, and that caused the legislation to be stopped. That issue now is being dealt with by transferring the responsibility for the operations of those terminals to domestic companies. So that issue is being addressed, for now. I believe Senator SCHUMER has