

real progress toward the democratization of Burma; the release of all political prisoners, most especially including Aung San Suu Kyi; and the inclusion of ethnic minorities in a peaceful reconciliation process.

Pressure is mounting on the SPDC, both from within the country and from without. Yet there is a path forward for the regime, and that is the path of genuine reconciliation. The SPDC needs to follow the pragmatic model of apartheid South Africa in the early 1990s: Recognize the need to enter into good faith negotiations with the legitimate leaders of the people.

I wish to convey a few messages to those inside Burma: To the peaceful protesters, know that the friends of democracy are with you and we are awed by your courage and your determination; to the regime: Know that the eyes of the world are upon you and recall that the crackdown in 1988 was followed by sanctions your Government still labors under. Know too that as the Government of Burma, you are responsible for the safety and well-being of the demonstrators and also of Aung San Suu Kyi. Know that the path forward is through genuine reconciliation, not repression.

In closing, I note that the SPDC is much like any other despotic regime that holds onto power through terror, through force, and, frankly, through corruption as well. The SPDC will not give way easily to peaceful protests and resistance. We must let those in Burma who seek peaceful change know they do not stand alone.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the 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 for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Colorado.

NATIONAL FIRST RESPONDER APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize our Nation's first responders. I, along with Senators MCCAIN and CASEY, introduced S. Res. 215 recognizing today, September 25, 2007, as National First Responders Appreciation Day. The Senate acted quickly and passed this resolution by unanimous consent with a total of 38 cosponsors.

The contributions that our Nation's 1.1 million firefighters, 670,000 police officers, and over 890,000 emergency medical professionals make in our communities are familiar to all of us. We see the results of their efforts every night on our TV screens and read about them every day in the paper.

From recent tornadoes in the Southeast and wildfires in the West in 2007, and the Christmas blizzard in Colorado in 2006, to the tragic events of Virginia Tech, Columbine High School, Platte Canyon High School, and the wrath of Hurricane Katrina, our first responders regularly risk their lives to protect property, uphold the law, and save the lives of others.

Nationwide, many of our first responders take the call on a daily basis and are exposed to life-threatening situations. While performing their jobs, many first responders have made the ultimate sacrifice. According to Craig Floyd, Chairman of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, a total of 1,649 law enforcement officers died in the line of duty during the past 10 years; an average of 1 death every 53 hours, or 165 per year, and 145 law enforcement officers were killed in 2006.

In addition, according to the United States Fire Administration, from 1996 through 2005, over 1,500 firefighters were killed in the line of duty, and tens of thousands were injured.

It is also important to note that four in five medics are injured on the job. More than one in two, about 50 percent, have been assaulted by patients, and one in two, 50 percent, have been exposed to an infectious disease, and emergency medical service personnel in the U.S. have an estimated fatality rate of 12.7 per 100,000 workers, more than twice the national average, and most emergency medical service personnel deaths in the line of duty occur in ambulance accidents.

Yet to recognize our first responders only for their sacrifices would be to ignore the everyday contributions they make in communities throughout America. In addition to battling fires, firefighters perform important fire prevention and public education duties such as teaching our children how to be fire safe.

Police officers do not simply arrest criminals; they actively prevent crime and make our neighborhoods safer and more livable. And if we or our loved ones experience a medical emergency, EMTs are there at a moment's notice to provide lifesaving care.

Last Saturday, I hosted a first responder appreciation day in northern Colorado and was overwhelmed by the support shown to our first responders by the public. Farmers, ranchers, small business owners and members of the community alike thanked their firefighters, paramedics, sheriffs, deputies, and police officers for being there at a moment's notice to lend a hand while putting their own safety at risk.

As a practicing veterinarian and a former health officer in Loveland, Col-

orado, I can attest to the numerous times I called on first responders to help me get through a situation. In many ways our first responders embody the very best of the American spirit. With charity and compassion, those brave men and women regularly put the well-being of others before their own, oftentimes at great personal risk. Through their actions they have become heroes to many. Through their example they are role models to all of us.

To all of our first responders, thank you for your service. I ask my colleagues to please join me today in recognizing September 25 as National First Responder Appreciation Day as we honor first responders for their contributions, sacrifices, and dedication to public service.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I wish to speak to two items that are before us as we are considering the Defense authorization bill this morning. The first has to do with an amendment that has been offered by Senator LIEBERMAN and myself and others to declare the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist organization, which would, if we do that, permit us to engage in economic sanction activity against the financing operations of the IRGC.

That is important, because according to all of the evidence we have, it is the IRGC that has been primarily responsible for the infusion into Iraq of the very dangerous equipment that has been causing great harm to our troops there, especially the new superpervator devices that are blowing up not just humvees but also even Abrams tanks.

It is the IRGC that is responsible for the training of Iraqis to be fighting our troops in Iraq and generally bringing the Iranian Government's anti-American activities from Iran into Iraq.

It is because of the IRGC's activities as a terrorist organization that our troops are dying in portions of Iraq today and, therefore, totally fitting for us to express our sense to the administration that it should designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization, thus, permitting us to invoke these economic sanctions against it.

The IRGC, interestingly enough, engages in a great deal of financial activity around the world, which makes these particular sanctions especially appropriate and potentially very effective. I am pleased it appears there will be an agreement on some slight modifications of language of the amendment which will permit us to, presumably, have a near unanimous vote when this amendment is considered, perhaps later this morning but certainly today.

I am looking forward to a colloquy with Senator LEVIN and Senator

LIEBERMAN so we can discuss our joint understanding of precisely what this joint resolution means and be able to act upon it so we can send a very clear message to the Iranian Government that its involvement against U.S. troops in Iraq will not be countenanced.

That is especially poignant today after the appearance by the Iranian President at a major U.S. university and his appearance today at the United Nations, in which it is pretty clear he will say just about anything to advance what he believes is the cause animating Iran's activities in the world today, whether it is truthful or not.

It seems to me, until there is a firm push back against this man and against the regime which he runs and the terrorist arm of that regime, the IRGC, they are going to continue to do what they do. And that is why it is especially poignant today, as I said, that the Senate act on this sense-of-the-Senate resolution to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

The other matter I wish to briefly talk about is another amendment that is pending before us offered by the Senator from Delaware. This is an amendment that contains several preamble statements about the situation in Iraq, and then calls upon the Iraqi Government to convene a council which will result in the creation of federal regions within Iraq.

This is something the Iraqi Constitution and a special law that was passed permit but does not mandate. It seems to me it would be a very big mistake on the part of the U.S. Government to be seen as demanding that the Iraqi Government take this step, which some would see as a breaking apart of the nation of Iraq, a partitioning of the country of Iraq into different pieces.

The people of Iraq have the authority to do that under this special law and under their Constitution. They fully have intended to have some kind of a conference to consider whether to do it. But I think it would be a big mistake for us to be seen as dictating to the Iraqi people how they want their Government ultimately to be governed, to exist, and to operate.

The creation of federal regions may be an appropriate way for them to do this; it may not. But that decision should be left to them. I think there has been an assumption that at least one federal region in the Kurdish north would be recognized, but there are questions about whether other federal regions would be.

I recognize there are some in the United States, and even in this body, who believe it would be best for Iraq if it were divided into federal regions. Maybe they are right; maybe they are not right. But it is clearly up to the Iraqi people to make this decision.

So were we to express ourselves on this, I think it would also be important for us to confirm our understanding and belief and commitment to the sovereignty of the people of Iraq to make

this decision, and to make it clear nothing in this particular resolution in any way is intended to undercut the sovereignty of the Iraqi people to make this decision for themselves. Otherwise, I fear the resolution could be read as the United States dictating to the Iraqis what their country is going to look like in the future and especially because it relates to the partitioning of the country. It seems to me this would be a very arrogant step on our part and something that obviously we do not want to be seen as doing.

I also would make the point that some of the recitations at the beginning of this resolution are misleading, if not outright wrong. It talks about the sectarian violence in the country. There is sectarian violence, but it totally ignores the activities of al-Qaida. Since al-Qaida has spawned much of the sectarian violence, it seems to me this is an incredibly important omission, especially because there are some in this body who talk about a change in mission, eventually having our mission in Iraq evolve to simply a counterterrorism mission, recognizing that al-Qaida is a significant force in the country, and we need to deal with al-Qaida.

We have al-Qaida on the run in the country, but al-Qaida is not gone by any means. In addition to that, al-Qaida spawns some of the sectarian violence as, for example, it did when it blew up the Golden Mosque in Samarra, thus inciting Shiites to attack Sunnis and starting a cycle of violence which continues to this day.

To simply refer to sectarian violence without any reference to the terrorism that is occurring because of al-Qaida would, I think, be a glaring omission and would raise significant questions. Especially if there are those who suggest we should eliminate a message of counterinsurgency, this is also totally contradictory because if you refer to all of the violence in the country as sectarian violence, but there is no counterinsurgency mission for the United States, then basically what you are saying is we simply leave that country to the tender mercies of all those groups engaged in this sectarian violence. That, we know, is antithetical to any kind of peaceful resolution to the disagreements that exist in that country and the eventual reconciliation of the people of that country.

So it seems to me a resolution of this type can do more harm than good in creating confusion about what the understanding of the United States of the situation in the country is, No. 1; No. 2, failing to recognize the prominent role that al-Qaida is playing and the importance of our mission in dealing with al-Qaida; and, third, suggesting it is the position of the United States to dictate to the Iraqi people that they need to partition their country when, in fact, that is a decision that needs to be left to them, which they could make if they wanted to under their Constitution, but certainly are not required to, and nothing we do should suggest we would

require them to do so. We have to recognize the sovereignty of that country.

The final point I wish to make is simply this: We have been on the Defense authorization bill now for 2 weeks—14 days. We were on it for many days a couple months ago, until the bill was pulled. There has been a lot of criticism, especially by my colleague, the ranking member on the Armed Services Committee, who has made the point that the time is long past that we should have passed this Defense authorization bill, which contains so many important elements for our troops—the pay raise for the troops, the wounded warrior legislation, and other important elements that are critical for our Armed Services.

For us to continue to simply use this bill as a vehicle to deal with endless resolutions dealing with Iraq—I gather there are a couple more that are on the way—is a misuse of the legislative process and of this important piece of legislation.

So I hope my colleagues would conclude one of these days that we have to pass the Defense authorization bill for the good of the troops and stop this endless debate about trying to change our policy or missions in Iraq. We have had that debate over and over and over again. We are going to have it again in the future. But let's not let it dominate everything we do in this body. I hope we can get on to the final passage on the Defense authorization bill soon.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask to be recognized for 5 minutes in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has that right.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I would like to add my voice to what Senator KYL has echoed. There are two votes today—I hope sometime today—and one is about whether we should adopt a resolution designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization. I think that would be a pretty easy vote for most of us, given the evidence out there about their involvement in international terrorism, particularly the Quds Force, which is sort of a subsidiary, regarding our troop presence in Iraq.

The question, I guess, we need to ask ourselves is: Why would the Iranian Government, through the Quds Force and other organizations, be sponsoring militia groups that are trying to kill Americans in Iraq?

There is a purpose for everything. I know why we are there. From my point of view, we are there to try to stabilize a country in a post-Saddam Hussein era that would allow the three groups to live tolerantly together and be an ally in the war on terror, be a place to check Iran, and deny al-Qaida a safe haven, and it could be a model for future Mideast expansion of representative government and the democratic process.

What would Iran be up to? My belief is the reason the Iranian regime is so hellbent on making sure the Iraqi experiment in tolerance fails in representative government—from a theocracy point of view, from the Iranian Government's point of view, the biggest nightmare for them would be a representative government in Iraq on their border. So they are not going to give that to the Iraqi people without a fight. They certainly are not going to give it to us without a fight.

We need to realize we are in a proxy war with Iran over the outcome of Iraq. For those who have determined this is a civil war only in Iraq, that the outcome is about who runs Iraq, I think you misunderstand the role Iran is playing. Iran is trying to shape Iraq in a way not to be a threat to the theocracy in Iran. They are trying to shape Iraq in a way that would be detrimental to our long-term national security interests. They are trying to be able to say to the world they stood up to America and drove us out. They are trying to expand their influence by defeating us in Iraq and in trying to destabilize their representative form of government, which would, again, be a nightmare.

So this resolution designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization is well founded based on the evidence that is being gathered against this organization. There is more to come. I have had a chance to be over in Iraq a couple times now looking at some cases involving Iranian involvement with the killing and kidnapping of American soldiers. So there is more evidence to come about Iran's involvement in trying to kill Americans and destabilize this representative government in Iraq.

Now, the second resolution is: What role should we play in dictating the outcome of this representative experiment in government in Iraq? I have great respect for Senator BIDEN. I think it is ill advised for us in the Senate to be adopting a resolution basically dictating or trying to give our sense of what should happen in Iraq because that destroys the whole underpinning of what we are trying to do.

The idea that the three groups can live separate and apart from each other without regional consequences is unfounded. The Shias, who wish a theocracy for Iraq, could never achieve that goal without pushback from their Sunni Arab neighbors. The Kurds, who wish to have an independent Kurdish state in the north, are going to run right into the teeth of Turkey. The Sunnis, who wish for the good old days of Saddam where they ran the country—that is never going to happen. The region is not going to allow that to happen.

So at the end of the day, I believe the effort to reconcile Iraq in central Baghdad will be successful not by a sense-of-the-Senate resolution but by a desire and sense of the people of Iraq. The one thing I have learned from my

last visit is that local reconciliation in Iraq is proliferating because people are very much tired of the killing. They are war weary. There is a suicide bomber wave going on right now against reconciliation efforts in Diyala Province, where 21 people were killed who were meeting to reconcile that province.

So al-Qaida is alive and well in Iraq. They are greatly diminished, but they show up where reconciliation is being discussed. The reason they show up where reconciliation is being discussed is because their big nightmare is to have Iraq come together and a woman to have a say about her children and Sunnis and Shias and Kurds living in peace and rejecting their extremist view of the Koran.

So the players in Iran and al-Qaida are very much pushing back hard. The question for this country is, Will we stand up to them and push back equally hard and stand by the moderate forces in Iraq, imperfect as they may be?

So I hope one amendment is adopted, designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization. I hope the other amendment, trying to give our sense of what to do in Iraq from the Senate's point of view, fails and we allow the Iraqi people to work out their problems with our help but insist they get on with it.

So with that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask to proceed in morning business for 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has that right.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, as I understand it, morning business on our side has been extended to 10:35.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has 8 minutes 45 seconds.

Mr. GREGG. Thank you, Mr. President.

FORUM FOR THE PRESIDENT OF IRAN

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise as an alumni of Columbia College to ask a question which I suspect is on the mind of a lot of the alumni of Columbia College and probably a lot of average Americans wandering around the country, which is, why did they create a forum for the President of Iran in a way that basically almost made him look like a sympathetic figure because of the actions of the President of the college? Open dialog on our campuses is important. We all recognize that. In fact, it is the essence of a good education. Columbia has a strong history, ironically, of having an extraordinary curriculum called a core curriculum which requires you to study all sorts of subjects whether you want to study them or not so that you gain knowledge in a variety of different areas and are exposed to a variety of different areas.

I have always believed that core curriculum was one of the great strengths of the college and was certainly one of the things I most enjoyed while I was there. So open discussion and having people on the campus who have an opinion which is antithetical to the values of our society is, I suppose, reasonable. But you have to put it in the context of what other discussion is allowed on our allegedly elite university campuses or even some campuses which are maybe Ivy League; that is, if you have a view which is conservative and you happen to want to express that opinion, you are quite often limited as to your ability to speak on those campuses. I, for example, suspect it would be very hard to get a date for Donald Rumsfeld to speak at Columbia. I suspect it would be probably even more difficult to get a date for the President of the United States to speak at Columbia. I am absolutely sure the Vice President of the United States would never be invited to speak at Columbia.

So one has to ask the question, Why did they decide to give a forum to an individual who is running a government of a country, the purpose of which is to develop a nuclear weapon, which nuclear weapon and weapons will be used to threaten world stability and clearly threaten their neighbors in the Middle East? Ahmadinejad has said he intends to eliminate Israel. In his speech yesterday, he affirmed his view that the Holocaust was a theoretical event, maybe never happened—an absurd statement. Yesterday, he went so far as to even describe his whole society as having nobody of a homosexual persuasion. He is leading a terrorist nation, or a terrorist government—the nation itself isn't terrorist, I suspect—but a terrorist government which is in the process of arming people in Iraq who are killing American soldiers. Yet Columbia invites him and gives him a forum in which to spread his values, to the extent you can call them values, or his views. It seems ironic and inconsistent and highly inappropriate in the context of what Columbia would not allow in the area of open discussion, which would be to have, for example, the Vice President of the United States speak, I suspect.

Then, to compound this error—the President of Iran is going to have his forum today at the U.N. Columbia did not have to give him an additional forum—but to compound that error, the president of the university was so egregious in the way he handled the situation, in my opinion, that he actually almost made the President of Iran look somewhat sympathetic, which is almost impossible to do. The attitude of arrogance and officiousness and the posturing of positions and questions by the president of Columbia in a way that basically gave Ahmadinejad the opportunity to basically respond as if he were being coherent—because the questions and the attacks were so aggressive in a way that was arrogant and inappropriate, even in dealing with