

this morning with the Republican leader. We are moving along. If we can finish these two bills this week, we will have done half of what we are obligated to do regarding the appropriations bills.

I think at that stage—and I told the Republican leader—we are going to start conferences on all these bills we have passed, four already, starting today. We need to be in a position where we can start sending some of these bills to the President. As I indicated, I will confer with the Republican leader as to which ones we should send out first. We need to get moving along.

We have to do everything within our ability to try to finish our work by November 16. That is not going to be easy, but we should try. As I have indicated previously, there are a lot of things left to be done prior to the Senate recessing on November 16 and work to be done prior to our recess—hopefully, tomorrow—dealing with various work we think we can do by unanimous consent. I urge Members to continue the level of cooperation we have witnessed, as we consider other appropriations bills.

I have also explained this to Senator MCCONNELL, my desires in that regard; that is, as soon as we get back, that we start to complete the Labor-HHS bill. Before we leave here this week, we are going to do a circuit judge and a number of district court judges.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me indicate my concurrence with the suggestions of the majority leader about moving forward. It is a good plan. We will have the maximum amount of cooperation possible on this side to move forward on appropriations bills.

BURMA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, imagine living under a brutal regime that sends out troops to shoot and kill unarmed, innocent people in the streets.

Imagine living under a regime that rewards the winner of a popular election not with political office, but house arrest.

And imagine a regime that carelessly allows the bloody and bruised body of a Buddhist monk, whose only crime was presumably to protest on behalf of peace, to float down a river.

But we don't have to use imagination, Mr. President. These horrific events are real. They are occurring now.

They are actually taking place in Burma, a country ruled by an illegitimate

military junta, the State Peace and Development Council, or SPDC. And since their seizure of power, the Burmese people have seen very little peace or development.

The world was reminded of the SPDC's oppression recently as Burmese democracy activists, led by Buddhist monks, demonstrated for freedom.

The government's reaction was brutal and barbaric, like something rarely seen since the end of the Cold War. They unleashed soldiers to fire at the unarmed demonstrators, killing untold numbers.

No one can be sure of the exact number because of the secrecy in which the SPDC cloaks the entire country. Nor can we be sure how many activists the government has imprisoned.

But we do know the fate of democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the winner of Burma's last free parliamentary elections in 1990. The SPDC has kept her under house arrest for 12 of the last 18 years.

We are reminded that such tyranny still exists in the 21st century. This despotic regime does not even pretend to seek to adhere to basic standards of human dignity.

The SPDC's reign of terror is so complete that even simply turning off the television set is an act of political courage for a Burmese citizen.

The AP reported yesterday that people in Rangoon are switching off the first 15 minutes of the government-run nightly news broadcast. It is one of the last acts of protest they have left, after the uniformed thugs and the barbed wire barricades have taken over the streets. "This is the least dangerous anti-government activity that I can take," the AP quoted one Rangoon woman, who was too afraid to reveal her name, as saying. "By doing this, I am showing that I am not listening to what the government is saying."

This Senate shares her contempt for the SPDC's empty words. Listen to how one SPDC ambassador explained events in Burma since the crackdown:

"As all are aware, things have calmed down. We are able to bring normalization to the situation."

Such a description, Mr. President, reminds me of the ancient Roman dictum, "They made a desert, and then called it peace."

Just because the protests have been ruthlessly suppressed, and Burma is fading from the pages of Western newspapers, does not mean the value of Burma's pro-democracy cause has diminished.

On the contrary, now more than ever, America and our allies must continue to press the members of the U.N. Security Council for a strong resolution against the Burmese regime.

And here in Washington, DC we're going to leave our televisions turned on, and continue to help in any way we can to support these brave people's cries for freedom.

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 and with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I was assured that I would be given more time than that. Let that be resolved.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the Senator is recognized.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN IRAQ

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, the calendar has just turned to October. The long-awaited month of September has passed. Why September? September, the month of the Petraeus report, was to be the month of accountability for Iraq, for its Government, and a time for accountability of the President's policy in Iraq. Instead, the result of the long-awaited month of September is that we are, once again, staying the course, as the President would have us do. We were not able to change course through the Defense authorization bill which passed yesterday, though many of us tried. Our efforts to change the mission away from deep involvement in Iraq's civil war and toward a more narrow focus on fighting al-Qaida failed, by a narrow margin, but failed. Efforts to enforce the transition with the power of the purse came up short as well.

Tragically, for well over 4 years into this war, at a time when the Army chief of staff is sounding the alarm about readiness of our Army, the Senate was not even able to provide our troops and their families with predictable deployment schedules—a stunning week. This is far less than the American people expect from us, when they elected us to do far more. Over the next few months, I implore my colleagues to use this time well and to think deeply about what our commitment in Iraq means to our future and the world. I especially want my colleagues and the American people to think about what might happen if there is another attack on the United States, which is always a possibility. The fact there has not been says there has been some interdiction and a lot of good luck, and al-Qaida takes its time in planning what it really cares about.

What if that attack has nothing to do with Iraq? What if the next attack is the result of planning and plotting

from al-Qaida and its terrorist affiliates who live in a safe haven on the Pakistani border? Will we regret that we did not do more to force the President to focus on the real threat facing this country—the only threat which wants to take us down in any way, shape, or form, which is possible?

We cannot continue to repeat the same mistakes over and over. It is past time for a thorough understanding of how we got to be mired in Iraq's civil war, and why we must get out of it.

I am often reminded of a prescient quote from Sandra Mackey in her book, "The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein," which was written, incidentally, before the war began.

Her book posed the central question: Would a future Iraq without Saddam Hussein be even more unstable and more problematic for the security of the United States itself?

Mackey did what this administration failed to do prior to the war and continues to fail to do today. She studied the historical, religious, ethnic, and political landscape that produced Iraq and the combination of the above factors that produced Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and allowed it to be sustained. She did her homework on the background and the nature of the country and the people and the ebb and the flow of the forces that have worked there for 1,500 years.

She predicted that we would pay a great price for our ignorance and utter lack of understanding of Iraq as a country.

She wrote in her book, looking back to the first gulf war, and now the future:

Then, in August of 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, the media turned its pages and air time over to Saddam Hussein.

Just say the word "Saddam," and you had people's attention, at least for a few moments.

Ever since, it has been Hussein, not Iraq, on whom Americans and their [civilian] leaders have riveted their attention. But the time is fast approaching when the United States, for a series of perilous reasons, will be forced to look beyond Hussein to Iraq itself. That is when all Americans will pay the price for what has been a long night of ignorance about the land between the rivers.

That being the Tigris and the Euphrates.

What a horrible price it is: 3,800 brave men and women killed; nearly 28,000 wounded, maimed, and scarred—most mentally and/or physically for the rest of their lives. Families have been torn apart. Divorce and suicide rates are climbing rapidly. Last year, 99 of our soldiers committed suicide, which is the highest rate since the Army started keeping records on that 26 years ago.

The war has cost us as a people and our security so dearly in lives, resources, our standing around the world, our sense of ourselves, our self-esteem, and our moral authority.

It tears my heart out that our troops are dying every day and suffering from

these horrific wounds which are the new property of the recent years because of the White House's misguided policies from which it will not move.

So I ask, why must we remain bogged down in Iraq—at such great cost—when there is a far greater threat that we must face and are not facing? Instead of focusing our resources on Iraq's civil war, we should be focusing all of our efforts on the elimination of al-Qaida, and, incidentally, doing something called protecting the American homeland, which seems to be casually handled in budget and in action.

We must finally understand the fundamental fact that our brave and highly skilled soldiers cannot resolve Iraq's internal political, social, and religious fights—there is no argument about that—particularly when enormous majorities of these people—98 percent of Sunni Arabs and 84 percent of Shia—want our forces to leave the country. That is more than a hint.

This is not defeat. It is not surrender. It is not retreat. It is simply getting a grip on the problems we face.

The reality is, it is not our fight. We cannot contribute there. There is very little we can do to affect it, if anything. Iraq is chaotic and violent because of deep-seated, centuries-old disputes that have nothing to do with us. It will likely remain chaotic and violent for the long foreseeable future, whether our military is involved in their dispute or whether it is not involved. It will not make any difference.

We had an open intelligence hearing in which a number of experts, Arabists came and told us that, in fact, America is marginal to what is going on over there. It is all about Sunnis and Shias and Kurds, and about their ancient fights going all the way back to the death of Muhammad. So this sectarian war has nothing to do at all with the United States, and it has nothing to do with our true enemy, al-Qaida, which has only latched on to the sectarian competition to take advantage of our own mistaken involvement in it.

The only thing that can change the course of Iraq is the Iraqi people and their leaders, and only if they can make dramatic changes in the way they view one another. I do not think that day will come. That is this Senator's opinion. We have examples of people getting along on a temporary basis when there are lots of troops around, other things, but that is not in their nature. It is not in the nature of that part of the world. We like to think it is because that is our nature. But it is not their nature.

There is, however, a vital strategic and tactical role for our military, and that is eliminating al-Qaida. But it first requires understanding that global terrorism inspired by al-Qaida is a different problem from sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia. That is what you have to understand first—very simple, very plain. Our present policy continues to follow al-Qaida's playbook by conflating these two prob-

lems to create one single-minded "enemy," thereby tying several different strands of violence into a single tangled knot. We must untie this knot and address these issues separately. And we must recognize that our involvement with Iraq is drastically diminishing our ability to do anything about al-Qaida.

The war against al-Qaida and affiliated terrorists has two key components, in this Senator's point of view: a tactical component—which is tracking, catching, and killing terrorists and disrupting their plots—and a strategic component—which is addressing the circumstances that produce terrorists and countering the ideology that drives them.

Our war in Iraq diverts our military and intelligence resources from the tactical component—it is very clear that al-Qaida is gaining strength along with the Taliban in Afghanistan because we moved a lot of people out to fight a war that we had no business being in, and so we suffered where we originally were about to be strong—and it limits the amount of money available to address poverty and evolution of governments in the Muslim world.

But perhaps the most damaging effect of the war in Iraq is the war of ideology. The Intelligence Committee has held several hearings this year looking at the role of ideology in the struggle against violent extremism. There is plenty of evidence, including unclassified intelligence assessments, that al-Qaida has successfully exploited the war in Iraq to recruit and train a new generation of terrorists—thanks to us. We have made that a possibility for them. Civilian leadership has handed them that golden gift, and they have made good use of it.

But there is longer term damage the war in Iraq is doing to our counterterrorism efforts. It is making it impossible for us to make any progress in the war of ideas throughout the Muslim world. It is clear that winning this part of the war is the only way we will have an effect in the long term on this kind of instability and chaos.

Al-Qaida wants us to stay in Iraq. As I said, we are following their game plan faithfully because our presence validates everything about their message of Westerners trying to dominate Muslims and occupy their lands—all of which is sacred to them. As long as we are there, voices of moderation toward the West will be drowned out.

The bottom line is this: Continued U.S. involvement in Iraq is in al-Qaida's interest, not America's. The longer we stay mired in Iraq, the stronger al-Qaida will grow.

Again, declassified intelligence reports and a broad spectrum of experts have noted al-Qaida is as strong as any other time since 9/11—this day—and growing stronger.

President Bush says we should not allow Iraq to become "a safe-haven from which they could launch new attacks on our country." Yet the President has already allowed al-Qaida to

create a safe haven, a huge safe haven on the Pakistani border. That situation is deteriorating on a daily basis, and it allows al-Qaida to continue to plan deadly attacks. And, believe me, that is their purpose for existing and living, and that is what they want from us. We have given them what they want from us.

Our struggle to eliminate global terrorism may remain a mystery to our President, but it must not remain a mystery to us in the Congress and to the American people. We do have a responsibility to act. Whether history looks kindly on this Congress or not is not really so important. But we must take every single serious measure available to force the President to face reality and refocus America's mission in that part of the world.

We have created deep and profound sadness and left thousands of people sitting in wheelchairs for the rest of their lives with shards of steel through their bodies that cannot be removed by surgeons. So they sit in wheelchairs in agony for the rest of their lives. They cannot take them out because they are too close to organs, arteries, so they sit in agony, probably a great number of them wishing they had just simply been killed.

I will end that part and simply say that I would also like to remind the President of the United States that signing the CHIP bill won't change anything in Iraq, but it may have a whole lot to do with changing young people in America in the way they grow up, what their opportunities are, and their sense of optimism and commitment to public service and to the good of our country.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, would the Senator yield?

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I yield to the Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I wanted to ask the Senator a question, but first I want to thank him for his very thoughtful and almost scholarly exposition of an examination of the situation in which we find ourselves in Iraq. I thank him for the service to his country, first in State government, rising to the position of Governor of his State, and now these many years as the Senator from West Virginia.

The question I want to ask the Senator is, in his statement about the antipathy between Sunnis and Shiites—and he noted the historical antipathy as it goes back, he said, to the time of Muhammad. Indeed, we saw that first erupt from—I guess it was Muhammad's grandson at the Battle of Karbala in 680 A.D., and as a result of the murder—or the defeat of the grandson at that point, it was that group that was defeated that went on, out of revenge, to become the Shiites—a minority among all Muslims but nevertheless one that was potent and built on revenge. Is this the understanding of history the Senator from West Virginia recalls in his statement and why

it is so difficult for us as an outside power to come in, in the middle of that sectarian strife, and try to bring about reconciliation?

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, the Senator from Florida, as usual, is correct. I thank him for his kind comments; he is not quite so correct about that.

But, yes, that is very much the case. It is simply an example of why it is that America—why intelligence is the spear, the tip of the spear, and that we never do anything ever again without listening to our intelligence—not to Chalabi, not to Richard Perle, but to our intelligence—which told us all of these things, which told us what would happen, timidly at first but more boldly later on.

We just live in a different world. We are homesteaders. I have always felt that way.

After the industrial revolution, the East got sort of flooded up with folks who had come from other places, and they went out West with the Gold Rush and the land rush, they got their 10 square acres and built their houses and picket fences and went about educating their children and doing good things but paying very little attention to the rest of the world because there was no apparent reason to do so. We had never been attacked since 1812, and that was marginal, and 1941 had not arrived. This awakened us in many ways, but, in fact, it really didn't. Conscription for World War II passed the Congress, I believe—or one House of the Congress—I believe by one vote, after Pearl Harbor. We go over and we fight just wars, and then we come back and we disarm.

It is not in our nature to know about the rest of the world. There is not a profound curiosity factor that pulls us, now that we are very much a part of the world, to understand what is going on in other parts of the world and in specific countries where there happens to be a threat of people who have come to see us as greedy, hate our green lawns and picket fences, and think that our view of life and morality is way off. They are very serious about that. We slough it aside, but they are very serious about that.

So how we thought we could somehow do this, come in and mediate something which had been going on I would say since the death of Muhammad in 632—but that doesn't matter; it is a question of how his succession would be carried out. That has lasted ever since. The British and French came in and created a place called Iraq, but the tribal people who kept living all through those years there were always the same and their habits were always the same, and, in fact, it is true throughout most of the rest of the world, if you go to the Philippines, if you go to many places—revenge, tribal loyalties, as opposed to central government loyalties. I have never been convinced that a constitution or a parliament means a whit to the people of Iraq. It meant everything to us because

it is sort of the definition of democracy on the rise, but I don't think it made any difference to them at all.

So we misread because we don't read, we don't read and we don't study, we don't go, we don't learn languages because we don't think we have to, and we have not had to because the world has been very simple—the Soviet soldiers in uniform versus American soldiers in uniform, our various planes, tanks, and all the rest of it, but then a red phone on each side to try to calm things down. The world is no longer simple. Everybody looks like everybody else in very dangerous places.

When we entered into Iraq, it was without thought, it was without study. The decision was more or less made within 2 or 3 days of 9/11, which, when you think about it, is rather silly. So there was no real understanding of Iraq, even as there is no real understanding of Iran today, no understanding of North Korea. There is a superficial understanding, the dramatic parts—nuclear this, something else that, starvation that. But who are they?

Why is it that North Korea and South Korea—44 million in the south, 22 million in the north—that amongst all of those people, 66 million people, there are only 400 surnames—"Nelson" being a surname, "Rockefeller" being a surname—there are only 400 surnames. The world is mixed and varied.

Japan disappeared for 250 years during the Tokugawa era. Nobody could get in, nobody could get out. That was just 150 years ago, and they still bear some of that with them. Do we understand that? I don't think we do. They are a democracy. Are they? They were handed their Constitution by GEN Douglas MacArthur, and except for a period of 3 months—and I was there during those 3 months—in the last 60 years, one party has controlled the country in its entirety.

So there are many things to understand in this world, but among those places we did not understand and still do not are the vicissitudes of Iraq, the Sunni and the Shiites, each of them bearing within them many layers of competition, revenge, family feuds, all the rest of it.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, the Senate has just witnessed one of the most insightful analyses by the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee on the present-day changes on planet Earth and how the United States should adapt to it by virtue of the fact of recounting history. This Senator is grateful to his chairman for that statement.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I thank the Senator.

INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 222, S. 1538.