

agencies have rescued about 300 people by helicopter alone. This is our State's largest aerial search-and-rescue operation in over a decade.

Let me paint a picture for all my colleagues of the damage that has occurred so far.

Parts of southwest Washington now look like a sea of brown water. Homes are flooded up to their roofs. Entire communities have been isolated by swamped roads. Out on our coast, winds of up to 100 miles an hour have knocked out power to literally thousands of homes. People feel very isolated today. They don't have power, they don't have telephones, and, in some areas, it is very tough to even assess how bad the damage is yet because we cannot even get to these people who do not have power or telephones.

I know a lot of relatives in the region and across the country are desperately trying this evening to reach their loved ones who have been affected, and our office, along with Governor Gregoire, Senator CANTWELL, and others, is doing everything we can to help.

Finally, I wish to mention one of the hardest hit areas, and that is Interstate 5. This is the major artery that links Portland, OR, and Seattle, WA. That highway has been closed since Monday, and some are saying it is going to be several more days before we even get it open. This has forced cars and trucks that are traveling from Seattle to Portland or Portland to Seattle to detour through the Tri-Cities. For those who don't know my State, that means they have to go over a mountain pass that is snow packed right now, take 4 extra hours, if the roads are good and the snow and ice has not stopped them on the pass used to get to Portland. So this is a major nightmare in our area.

It is very hard to explain the impact of all this damage, but estimates of cost to businesses from delays on that highway alone have been placed at \$4 million a day to our businesses that rely on this major artery to get their goods quickly and safely back and forth.

As I said in a speech earlier today on the floor, the impact of these storms reinforces how important our transportation infrastructure is to absolutely everyone. We are all one rainstorm, one bridge disaster away from huge impacts to our economy and to families' lives.

Again, I wished to come to the floor this evening to send my heartfelt thanks to everyone who is working so hard in my State of Washington and to all those people who have been affected so devastatingly by these storms. They are all in my thoughts every minute. My heart goes out to them, and I know everyone stands ready to be by their side.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

COST OF THE IRAQ WAR

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, for more than 4 years now, President Bush has been declaring victory or progress in Iraq. The thousands of soldiers who have lost their legs, gone blind or suffered horrible nightmares might be finding it hard to celebrate. The families of those men and women might not be cheering very loud about the President's view of success. Thousands more whose children, whose mothers and fathers are lost forever might be finding it hard to share in the latest cries of victory.

Yes, the number killed last month dropped to 37, and we certainly rejoice in the fact that fewer soldiers are dying. That is still another 37 families who have no reason to rejoice. More American troops have died this year than any other year.

No matter how much military progress has been made in Iraq, that kind of security can only go so far. No amount of troops will force Iraqi politicians to agree on a fair distribution of oil revenues. No Abrams tank can build trust between Shiites and Sunnis.

The whole point of this surge was to create the conditions necessary for Iraqis to make political progress. But 2 weeks ago, the Washington Post ran a headline that said: "Iraqis Wasting an Opportunity, U.S. Officers Say."

Iraqi security forces are still unable to operate on their own. Any cease-fire between factions could evaporate in minutes. We started drawing down troops to pre-surge levels, but we have to wonder whether we are going to be told again we have to re-surge, do it all over again because the Iraqi Government and security forces are largely still at square one.

Our generals in Iraq have been the first to admit that a solution to the country's conflict has to be more than a military solution; it has to be a political solution. A political solution is up to Iraqi leaders. Right now there has been practically zero progress on the core critical issues necessary to bring a lasting peace.

The administration set 18 benchmarks for the Iraqi Government to meet. They have barely met three. So is it time to turn up the pressure or let them keep squabbling while Americans pay and Americans die?

There is more corruption in Iraq than almost anywhere else on the face of the Earth. We simply don't know where our money is going. It is a pit of quicksand when it comes to money. Some estimates say that as much as a third of the money we spend on Iraqi contracts and grants winds up unaccounted for or stolen—a third of billions of dollars, with a lot of it going straight to Shiite or Sunni militias. Let me repeat that: \$1 out of every \$3 we pay gets either lost or stolen—lost or stolen. Even after billions and billions and billions of dollars in funding, Iraqi society is still dysfunctional.

American money went toward improving, for example, municipal water

systems in Iraq. The Iraqis now break open the pipes and steal the water. American money went toward books for schools. Iraqis steal them from the Ministry of Education and sell them on the street at three times the price. Government officials have sold the furniture right out of their offices. That is what the American taxpayers are funding.

So is it time to change our strategy, or do we ignore the corruption while Americans pay and Americans die? Here is the message we send to Iraqi politicians by sending them a blank check with no expiration date: Continue your squabbles. We will continue to see the loss of American life and continue to empty our treasury for you for as long as you like. That message is: You can sit back while Americans pay and Americans die. I think it is time for a different message, Mr. President.

After seeing a surge in the military that has lasted for months do nothing about a splurge of corruption that has lasted for years, the conclusion we have to draw from that is clear: The only way Iraqis will take charge of their own country and make the tough compromises necessary to form a functional society is when they believe we won't be there forever. That is the only way. It is long past time for the Iraqi Government to take charge, and the only way they are going to step up is if we begin to transition out. A reduction in fighting is not an excuse for a reduction in planning for our involvement to end.

The fact is, the violence has not stopped and the costs of this war have only gone up. The war is costing us \$10 billion or so per month. The debt our Government is taking on, and that taxpayers are going to be responsible for, is exploding at the rate of \$1 million a minute. I heard our colleagues earlier today, when I was Presiding Officer, talk about fiscal responsibility and what we bequeath to the next generation. Well, we are bequeathing them \$1 million a minute of debt, because none of the money the President asked for is paid for—none of it. Yet when we try to invest in America, we are told there is no money for it. But it is okay to continue to saddle the next generation of Americans with a huge debt, \$1 million a minute.

When the numbers are that high, every American taxpayer has to ask him or herself a basic question: How does the President plan to pay for the war?

Well, last week, we got a small part of that answer. He wants to cut funding for counterterrorism at home. According to a leaked administration document, President Bush wants to cut counterterrorism funding for cities by more than half. When I saw that article, I had to do a double-take. When I read that, I thought the report had to be wrong. It had to be wrong. Coming from the State of New Jersey, which lost 700 people—700 of my fellow citizens on that fateful day, and coming

from a nation that lost 3,000 fellow Americans—to hear that we are going to continue to pump money into this war, a blank check, unpaid for, but that we will not take care of our security here at home, that had to be wrong.

His reported budget would slash funding for police, firefighters, and rescue workers. It could mean fewer security guards at ports, less reliable detection of explosives, and less training for security personnel. Basically, it would undermine the entire effort to prevent terrorism that our Nation realized that September day, one of the most urgent challenges we have ever faced. Cutting counterterrorism funding is simply outrageous.

Now I certainly hope the Congress is not going to stand for it, and the people who live in those cities definitely will not stand for it. But is it necessary to remind the President how important it is to protect our homes and families from terrorist attacks? Do we have to say that we must do everything within the bounds of possibility and the law to prevent a terrorist attack from happening again? And this suggestion that we are ultimately spending our efforts and lives and national treasure there so we don't have to spend it here is a falsehood. That is a falsehood.

Is anyone here in America going to feel safer at the end of the day when counterterrorism funding is cut for their hometown security, which as we found out on that fateful day on September 11 is how we responded—with local police, local firefighters, local emergency management? It was not the Federal Government but the local public safety entities. Is that a risk President Bush wants to take, to cut what amounts to .06 percent of the Federal budget, especially when the war in Iraq has eaten up \$455 billion and counting; when the amount he wants to take away from police and firefighters, the people who respond, should, God forbid we have an attack, is an amount we spend in Iraq every 5 days? The money we are talking about for protecting us here at home in America is what we spend every 5 days in Iraq. What are our values? What are our priorities, Mr. President?

The President has requested \$1 billion for the Iraqi police, but he wants to cut funding for the community-oriented policing program that fights crime in America's communities. So he will spend anything on the streets of Baghdad, but he suddenly thinks we should be stingy when it comes to security on the streets of our hometowns. The President wants a blank check for Iraq, but nothing for America.

That ties into what you have been seeing on the floor over the last several days. The reason we can't get appropriations bills out is because Republicans object to the type of domestic priorities the American people elected a new majority to achieve. He wants a blank check for Iraq, but nothing for America. From children's health to

cancer research to crucial water resources, the President has vetoed what is most essential: our health, our safety, and in essence, our liberty. He has repeatedly said it is all too expensive. Meanwhile, he is requesting \$200 billion more to fight a war in Iraq that has achieved nothing for any of us; that has ultimately seen the deaths of thousands of Americans and has left us more disliked around the world as a nation than at any other point in recent history. He wants a blank check for Iraq, but nothing for America. If he submits a budget that cuts funding for counterterrorism, I think he will truly be laying a final brick in the Department of Homeland Hypocrisy.

In high school many of us read George Orwell's book "1984," which was about a nightmare world where words mean the exact opposite of what they should mean. America is starting to understand what the word "security" means to the President. He apparently thinks funding firefighters, police officers, and emergency responders is excessive, but he wants to spy on Americans without warrants, he wants to tap people's phones without any oversight, he condones procedures even the U.S. Army itself considers torture, he wants to throw people in jail without trials, and he basically ignores the most basic tenets of the justice system of the United States since the Constitution came into effect in 1789.

President Bush wants to cut funding to stop terrorism in order to fund a war that has created terrorists. We didn't have al-Qaida in Iraq before we invaded Iraq. We have al-Qaida in Iraq after we invaded Iraq.

America isn't just ready to turn the page on this administration; we are ready for a whole new book. I hope, as we move forward, we can get some of these domestic priorities that the Nation wants to see. I cannot believe we would spend \$200 billion for Iraq but not a fraction of that to be able to ensure that millions of American children can have health care. I cannot believe we would spend \$200 billion more for Iraq but not enough to handle police, firefighters, and emergency management in our communities across the landscape of this country. I cannot imagine approving \$200 billion for Iraq but not being able to deal with the alternative minimum tax relief, a measure Senator REID has tried to bring to the floor.

On issue after issue, the obstructionism, the roadblocks, the coordination between the White House and our colleagues here in the Senate to impede the progress the American people want to see is incredible, as it is equally incredible to continue this course by asking for a blank check for Iraq, but nothing for America.

PERU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I am a longtime supporter of policies designed to open foreign markets to our Na-

tion's exports through trade agreements. I have fought to break down barriers that many other countries have erected to block our exports and to create unfair advantages. The fact is that mutually beneficial trade agreements serve to improve farm income and create jobs here at home, and American consumers receive benefits as well, including lower prices and a greater variety of goods.

I supported the fast track procedure in the 1988 Trade Act. I voted for the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Uruguay Round GATT Agreement. However, trade agreements are not only about commercial transactions. Trade agreements also have major environmental impacts, and they have major implications for the legal rights and working conditions of laborers. All of these factors must be carefully considered in determining whether to support a given trade agreement.

Certainly, there are modest positives in this Peru Free Trade Agreement. The American Farm Bureau Federation has estimated that the agreement would generate a net increase in U.S. agricultural exports of more than \$700 million annually once the agreement is fully implemented in 2025. I note, however, that, in today's dollars, that would represent only roughly one-half of 1 percent of current U.S. agricultural exports.

In addition, this agreement would level the playing field for the United States vis-à-vis other major agricultural exporters in South America. Both Brazil and Argentina enjoy preferential access into Peru's markets because of Peru's associate membership in Mercosur, and this FTA would make it easier for our products to compete with exports from Brazil and Argentina. However, I have always considered these country-by-country trade deals to be far less than ideal. It would be far better to negotiate a successful global trade agreement under the auspices of the World Trade Organization.

Despite these modest benefits, I believe that, on balance, the Peru Free Trade Agreement falls short. I am particularly concerned about the agreement's deficiencies with regard to fighting child labor.

As many of our colleagues know, I have been working to reduce abusive and exploitative child labor around the world for a decade and a half. I first introduced a bill on this issue in 1992. Over the years, I have worked hard to improve the labor provisions in various trade measures, concentrating particularly on abusive and exploitative child labor. I believe strongly that trade agreements should support and reinforce existing international child-labor standards, not undercut them. On this criterion, the Peru FTA falls short.

According to the best estimates by the International Labor Organization, ILO, there are at least 218 million child laborers between the ages of 5 and 17 in today's global economy. Of these 218