

honored by the Illinois Democratic Women with the Eleanor Roosevelt Outstanding Democratic Woman of the Year Award—an award presented to only one woman each year—for her work in grassroots politics. Linda is also a founder of the Illinois Women in Leadership Organization, which provides opportunities and training for women to become more politically involved in my State.

Linda is deeply involved in her community, having worked in a lot of organizations, including the Committee to Study the Honesty and Integrity of Springfield Elections, the University of Illinois at Springfield Alumni Council, the Springfield Urban League, and is a former member of the Executive Committee for the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries.

But if you ask those who know Linda well, they will tell you that her story should not just be told in terms of what she has done but the people's lives she has affected. She is known as the go-to person in my part of the world, especially if you want to run for office. She is known not just as a fabulous adviser and mentor; she is the hardest working person I have known in the political scene. She is not afraid to roll up her sleeves and get into the thick of it. Linda managed the campaign of Senator Penny Severns, whose life was taken away too soon by breast cancer. They were quite a team. Penny Severns won a district she was never supposed to win, and Linda was right by her side. She has always been a great person to talk to. She always had time to listen. To be Linda Hawker's friend is to know loyalty, honesty, a diligent worker, and the best kind of friendship.

Her leadership as both Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Illinois Senate has been an example of quiet integrity to all of those, including myself, who have worked with her. She will start a new chapter in her life with retirement, but I know no matter what she does she will be successful.

Last night, they had a reception for Linda in Springfield and I was told by press accounts this morning it was one of the largest bipartisan turnouts in history, which she truly deserved. She was that kind of a person and still is and will be for many years to come. We hope she has many great adventures in the future.

Linda, congratulations for your hard work, and thanks for being my friend.

THE IRAQ RESOLUTION ON MILITARY FORCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it was just a few years ago—some days seem much longer—that we considered a resolution in the Senate to authorize the use of military force in Iraq. We cast thousands of votes. Most members of Congress cannot recall too many of them specifically, unless reminded. But you never forget a vote on a war because you know that, at the end of the

day, if you decide to go forward, people will die. It is your fervent hope that it will be the enemy, of course, but you know, in honesty, that it will be American soldiers and innocent people as well. So a vote on a war is one that Members of Congress—most every one of them—take so seriously. It costs you sleep, as you think about the right thing to do.

I can recall when the vote was cast on this war in Iraq. I sat on the Intelligence Committee for months listening to the testimony and all the evidence that was brought before us, listening behind closed doors to this classified information about the situation in that country, and then emerging from that Intelligence Committee and reading newspapers and watching television, saying the American people are not being told the same thing outside that room that I am being told inside that room. There were serious differences of opinion in this administration about whether there were even weapons of mass destruction.

At one point, we challenged the administration and said: If there are weapons of mass destruction, for goodness' sake, turn over some locations to the international inspectors. Let them find them. Once they discover them, it will confirm our fear, and other countries will join us in this effort against Saddam Hussein. But, no, they wouldn't do it. Although they told us there were hundreds of possible locations, they wouldn't turn over any specific location possibility to the international inspectors.

It raised a question in my mind as to whether they were very certain of any locations. And, if you remember, weapons of mass destruction were the centerpiece of the argument for the invasion of Iraq.

On Christmas Day many years later after that decision was made on the floor of this Senate, we learned that more Americans have now died in Iraq than died on September 11. Less than a week after that disclosure, on New Year's Eve, we marked a mournful milestone in the war in Iraq: the death of the 3,000th U.S. serviceman killed in Iraq.

Today, as I stand before the Senate, the Department of Defense reports that we have lost 3,014 American soldiers in Iraq. The 3,000th death is as tragic as the 1st death, the 300th death, the 1,000th death, but the staggering scope of casualties, the enormous toll this war has taken, must not be allowed to pass unnoticed.

America's service men and women are the bravest and best in the world. I know I say that with some patriotic pride, having been there to sit and have breakfast and lunch with them in Iraq, Afghanistan, and their other assignments. I just can't say enough about their courage and sacrifice, just ordinary, young-looking men and women who do extraordinary things.

This last October, with Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island, while sitting for

breakfast with a group of about 12 soldiers from Illinois, I went around the table: Where are you from? Downstate. Oh, you are from the suburbs of Chicago. Or, you live in the city. We talked about everything under the Sun. We talked about the Chicago Bears, the Cubs, the White Sox, and how things were going back home.

I asked them how things were going. They said: We had to get up early. We had to form an honor guard at dawn because one of our soldiers was killed in the middle of the night by one of these homemade bombs that takes so many lives.

I asked: How often does that happen?

Well, pretty frequently.

We know it does because we read the press accounts. We think of these young men and women and the challenges they face every single day as they risk their lives for America. We think about the families back home deep in prayer that their soldier is going to return home safely.

We owe them so much. We owe them our prayers and thanks for sure. But those of us in elected office owe them more than that. Part of what we owe them is a plan to bring this war to a close, a plan to bring them home safely, a plan to congratulate them as they return home for what they have given to this country.

Last March, President Bush was asked whether there would come a day when there will be no U.S. forces in Iraq. His answer to that simple question spoke volumes. The President said: That, of course, is an objective, and that will be decided by future Presidents and future Governments of Iraq.

Now we are told that in a few days the President will make a major policy announcement about this war. According to reports he is going to call for an increase, a major escalation of the U.S. troops committed in Iraq. The administration carefully has used the word "surge" to suggest this is somehow temporary, but we have to listen carefully when the President makes his announcement to see just how temporary it might be for the 10,000 or 20,000 or more American lives that will be at risk because of this decision.

Sending tens of thousands more troops to Iraq is not a change of course. It is not what our top military experts advise. In fact, they have said just the opposite. It is clearly not what the American people bargained for when they voted just a few months ago for a change in our direction in Iraq. It is literally and tragically more of the same. I think our troops deserve better.

President Bush has always said he will send more troops if the commanders in the field said they needed more. In December, General Abizaid, the head of the U.S. Central Command, testified before the Armed Services Committee. This is what the general said. The President told us he was listening to the generals:

Our troops' posture needs to stay where it is as we move to enhance the capabilities of the Iraq security forces and then we need to assess whether or not we can bring major combat units out of there. . . .

General Abizaid went on to say:

The ability to sustain that commitment [of 20,000 additional troops] is simply not something we have right now.

That was a statement made by General Abizaid just a few weeks ago. He is now moving on. He is being replaced. This was the advice of the leader of the Army and the Central Command in the field of battle. General Abizaid continued:

I met with every divisional commander, General Casey, the core commander, General Dempsey. We all talked together. And I said, "In your professional opinion, if we were to bring in more American troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq?"

General Abizaid testified:

And they all said no. And the reason is, because we want the Iraqis to do more. It's easy for the Iraqis to rely upon us to do the work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future.

Last month, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, the group that was headed by former Secretary of State James Baker and Congressman Lee Hamilton of Indiana, offered a series of recommendations that they say could allow U.S. forces to largely redeploy safely out of Iraq by April 1, 2008. The President has made it clear—although he thanked the commission—that he doesn't share their feelings. He also apparently does not share the views of the Commission that the situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating.

This war began with deception—a deception of the American people about the threat of weapons of mass destruction. It then moved into a phase of denial where we were told over and over: Oh, the Iraqi soldiers, the forces are just terrific; we are getting them ready to take our place there; we are going to stand down when they stand up. As violence ramped up dramatically, as more and more people died, including American soldiers, it went from deception to denial, and now we are in delusion, a delusion that somehow sending more American troops into the field of battle, putting them in the midst of a civil war that finds its roots in history 14 centuries old, that somehow placing our best and bravest soldiers, marines, airmen, and sailors in this crossfire of sectarian violence, putting more of them there, as the President is likely to suggest, is going to bring this to an end sooner.

I think the President is wrong, I think the Iraq Study Group had it right, and I think sending those troops in, as General Abizaid said, gives a message to the Iraqis that is completely wrong.

Think about this for a minute. We sent the best military in the world. They deposed Saddam Hussein, took him out of power in a matter of weeks,

dug him out of a hole in the ground, put him on trial which led to his execution. We then gave the Iraqis a chance to vote on their own constitution. We allowed them to form their own government. We have spent \$400 billion. We have lost 3,014 lives as of this moment, and the number, sadly, continues to mount. Twenty-three thousand American soldiers have come home injured, 2,000 of them multiple amputees, soldiers who are blinded, soldiers whose lives may never be the same. We have done all this for this nation of Iraq, and now what we ask of them is simply this: Stand up and defend your own country. If you believe in your country and your future, be willing to stand and fight for it. Be willing to make the hard political decisions to bring peace and stability to your country.

That is the message we should be giving them, but instead, this administration's message is we will send in more American soldiers, maybe 10,000, 20,000, 30,000. We will escalate this conflict. We will escalate our commitment. We will build up these forces.

According to two members of the Iraq Study Group who were present when the group met with the President in November, President Bush said he continues to use the word "victory" to describe the vision in Iraq because "it's a word the American people understand." The President said: If I start to change it, it will look like I am beginning to change my policy.

That is a staggering statement because, Mr. President, we do need a change of policy. We need to face the reality of what we are currently facing in Iraq.

There are other costs beyond what I have mentioned. There are costs that we feel at home. I voted against this Iraq war—23 of us did—but I voted for every single penny this President has asked for. My thinking on it is very basic and fundamental: If it were my son and daughter in uniform, I would want them to have everything they need—everything. I can quarrel with this President, debate him all day about the policy, but not at the expense of the safety of our troops.

The money we spent there—almost \$2 billion a week, over \$400 billion in total—is money that has been taken out of America, away from our needs at home, money that, sadly, has been piled up in debt as this administration refuses to even pay for the war they are waging.

We are currently spending about \$8 billion a month on Iraq—\$8 billion. We are going to be asked to come up with another \$100 billion soon and, sadly, that money we spent so far doesn't even include the cost of reequipping our Armed Forces or caring for our veterans who have come home. That is a long-term cost of this war that we will pay for decades to come.

What could we have done in America with the \$380 billion or \$400 billion that we spent in Iraq? We could have paid for all of the following that I am about

to list—all of the following: Health care coverage for all of the uninsured children in America for the entire duration of this war; 4-year scholarships to a public university for all of this year's graduating high school seniors in America; new affordable housing units for 500,000 needy families; all the needed port security requirements to keep our homeland safe; substantial new energy conservation programs. Or, we could have completely funded No Child Left Behind.

Remember that program where we tested our kids and found out they needed help and then the Federal Government didn't send the help? We could have done that.

Or, we could have provided savings accounts for low-income families preparing for retirement, or made a down-payment on reducing the alternative minimum tax.

From my State of Illinois, our share of the Iraq war comes to about \$19 billion. With that \$19 billion, we could have paid for 2.5 million Illinois children in Head Start, insured 11 million children for 1 year, paid the salaries of 330,000 teachers for a year, underwritten 170,000 new affordable housing units, and covered 900,000 4-year scholarships to public universities.

President Bush has the distinction not just for this policy in Iraq, but the fact that he is the first American President in our history who has cut taxes in the midst of a war. His tax cuts have benefited the wealthiest people in America and left the largest debt in the history of the United States, and every year we remain in Iraq we add \$75 billion to \$100 billion to that national debt.

Beyond the cost of human lives and dollars, there are strategic costs in this war. Our military is stretched dangerously thin. The National Guard units that have been activated have come home with less equipment. Today, in Illinois, we have about a third of the equipment we need to respond to another crisis either at home or overseas.

We also know that when it comes to combat readiness, there are no units prepared to go into war at this moment. We have stretched our military so thin. The costs of reequipping these units and rebuilding these services are enormous and go way beyond what we have already spent in Iraq. Investing U.S. troop levels in Iraq will almost certainly prolong our involvement in that nation. It almost certainly will make President Bush's statement that it will be up to the successors to bring our forces home a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is not what the American people voted for in November. Sending these troops to Iraq will send the wrong message to Iraq. It will signal that Americans will continue to bear the burdens of this war.

This year, the British, who have been the most cooperative in helping us there, are slated to pull their troops out. At that point, it will be virtually

an American struggle, with only a handful of countries remaining by our side.

General Casey, the commanding general in Baghdad, recently stated:

The longer we in the U.S. force continue to bear the main burden of Iraq's security, the longer it lengthens the time that the government of Iraq has to make the hard decisions about reconciliation and dealing with the militias.

General Casey also said:

It has always been my view that a heavy and sustained American military presence was not going to solve the problems in Iraq over the long term.

These are the generals President Bush said he listens to, and these are the people who are in command of our forces. These are voices which clearly disagree with the escalation of this war in Iraq.

Last week, America bid farewell to a good and decent man named Gerald Ford. I was honored to be at his funeral service in Grand Rapids, MI. He was a man who served at one of the most tumultuous times in American history. He inherited a war he couldn't win. Years later, when asked about that Vietnam war, President Ford said:

My approach was we inherited the problem with the job. It is my obligation on behalf of the country to try and solve the damn thing.

A generation later, our Nation faces a similar moment. We need to work together. We need to cooperate on a bipartisan basis to find a plan worthy of the courage and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. It should begin now. It shouldn't be left to future Presidents.

If one reads the authorization for Iraq, one understands that the goals and missions of that statement for the use of force have changed dramatically. No weapons of mass destruction, no Saddam Hussein, no threat to America. It is time for us to announce that we achieved our goals in Iraq and now the American people need to hand this responsibility over to the people of that nation in Iraq.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, it is my understanding we have a 10-minute limit in morning business. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed an extension of an additional 5 minutes, for a total of 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAQ STUDY GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, on the basis of the very kind comments of the Senator from Illinois and others, very reasoned comments, many of these comments having been stimulated by the Iraq Study Group, which Mr. Baker and Mr. Hamilton both made their first presentation to the Congress, to our Senate Armed

Services Committee, back in early December, there is a lot of wisdom in this. The members of this study commission are some of the finest public servants to have been produced in this country and who obviously have the interest of this country at heart and who are struggling through this thicket of unclear occurrences in the Middle East and Central Asia. The goal is to figure a way in which there might be a chance at stabilizing Iraq politically and economically so that country has a chance to continue to exist with a democratically elected government. Yet, at this point, it is certainly not clear that stability is going to materialize. We certainly hope it does because of the consequences for America and for the rest of the free world if Iraq crumbles into chaos.

Looming over that entire region is an ascendant Iran, an Iran that is penetrating its influence, not only through the Shiites in Iraq but through its efforts in other parts of the Middle East, through Syria, through Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian Territories and as a result, we see the increasing influence of Iran and their brand of Shiite Islam. This is much to the consternation of a majority of the Arab world, in particular the Sunni Arab world as well as Israel.

In the 2 weeks preceding Christmas, I went on a visit to nine nations within a 12-day period, coming back just in time for Christmas. I was struck by the words I would hear from leaders in Israel where I first visited and the words I would hear by other Arab leaders, in some cases heads of state in Sunni Arab nations. Those words were almost identical in describing the real present and future threat posed by Iran. Of course, a lot of that concern was not only related to Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon but the immediate concern of Iraq spiraling into chaos, with no stability whatsoever, with the continued penetration by the Iranian Shiite influence.

I first went to Israel, and then continued on, visiting with the heads of state and the governments, in Palestine, and then on to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, on to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, which, by the way, General Hayden, the head of the CIA, requested I go and spend time with the Saudi King, to urge the Saudis to exert their influence with the Sunni tribes in Iraq working towards reconciliation. I went from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain and then into Iraq. I have come away with a number of conclusions.

After visiting with the marines in western Iraq in Al Anbar Province, indeed a U.S. troop increase may well help us be better able to stabilize that part of Iraq. It is almost entirely Sunni, and the major threat there is al-Qaida, and of course the big military threat to us there is the IEDs, the improvised explosive devices.

I, along with Senator COLEMAN of Minnesota, as we were in Iraq together—and he can certainly speak for

himself, but I think we were persuaded by talking to the Marine commanders that an increase of some number of troops there would help them in what they are doing on a daily basis, which is trying to get the local Arab leaders to take over their own security. There is some degree of success in western Iraq but not in Baghdad. In Baghdad there is the sectarian violence that everyone has heard about.

What we were shocked to hear was from prominent Sunni members of the Government in Iraq, in Baghdad. One prominent, high-level Iraqi Government official, a shia, said to us: Sectarian violence is not the problem. Those were almost his exact words. In his opinion, the problem was the Sunni extremists, the Baathists who want to retain power, just like they had it in the old days under Saddam Hussein, and the foreign fighters from al-Qaida. For that high-level official to sit there and look two U.S. Senators in the eyes and say that sectarian violence was not the problem is either a complete misreading of the circumstances, the reality on the ground, or else his mind is so enveloped in sectarian violence and the old hatreds of the Shiites against the Sunnis and vice versa, those hatreds that are so ingrained that he can't see beyond that sectarianism.

So in a few days, we are going to receive the President's new plan. I look forward to seeing and hearing the details of it, but it is not a new plan because there is no plan now. We need some honest realism in the policy, not hardheaded ideology. This so-called new policy ought to be driven by realism. It is the situation on the ground in Baghdad that no surge is going to solve the problem. I think those who are leaking this report in advance of it coming out have it backwards. A surge to solve the sectarian violence is not going to work. We ought to have the sectarian violence subside because Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites decide that it is more in their interests to reconcile than it is to fight the old hatred fights. At the same time, it would be my recommendation, as the Iraq Study Group report has recommended, that we start moving more to a training mission from a combat mission. Only if the sectors decide they are going to reconcile, then we, the United States, can help them be better prepared in a training mission instead of a combat mission. It is my hope that the Saudis would utilize their extensive tribal Sunni contacts in order to urge those Sunnis in Iraq that the only way you are going to see a better end of the day is to have some reconciliation. And the Saudis told me that they are now starting to see this opportunity.

There have been things that have come out in the last couple of weeks that I don't think bode too well for us. The one general who, time after time, came before our Senate Armed Services Committee and in whom I had a degree of trust in what he was saying