

medical problem that was related to an emotional problem, mental problem.

If that same thing occurred today, it would not have mattered. We have made progress in accepting people who have emotional problems for whatever reason, that they are just as sick as someone who has other kinds of problems. It is too bad there will always be this asterisk with Tom Eagleton. However, he was selected to be Senator McGovern's Vice President but was not able to continue in that position because of a medical condition.

He was a wonderful man who served in the Navy. He graduated from Harvard Law School. His father was a lawyer who loved politics and ran for public office in Missouri. He served on the St. Louis Police Board and the Board of Education.

Tom is survived by his wife, the former Barbara Ann Smith. They married in 1956. He has two children. He left the Senate 20 years ago, as I indicated earlier. He was a tremendously good Senator. As the Chaplain indicated today, our prayers go out to his family. Senator Eagleton will be missed. He has made his mark on our country and the world. He fought for clean water and clean air. He had strong beliefs on the conflict in Vietnam. He showed, over a lifetime, that one man can make a difference.

So, Mr. President, I hope all Senators will pause to reflect on the service this great man made to our country. I am sure we should all understand if we patterned our political career after Tom Eagleton, we could not go wrong.

#### 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, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be given 10 minutes to speak in morning business.

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

Mr. AKAKA. Thank you, Mr. President.

#### VETERANS MEDICAL CARE

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, last week, my majority colleagues and I on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs submitted the required views and estimates on the administration's fiscal year 2008 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In summary, we are recommending a \$2.9 billion increase over the adminis-

tration's request for veterans medical care. We believe this is the total amount necessary to treat all eligible veterans from World War II until the present time and to maintain the quality of VA medical services through the upcoming fiscal year.

This amount would also provide the VA with resources to absorb the thousands of service members presently on medical hold at Walter Reed and in other military facilities. There is no question we must ensure these brave men and women are provided the best care possible.

Today's Washington Post leads with a story titled, "It Is Just Not Walter Reed." The story focuses on the various Federal facilities across the system, including VA facilities. I urge my colleagues to understand that at the heart of any solution to improve care is increasing resources to match demand and to ensure the facilities themselves are up to par.

I intend to hold a hearing later this month on cooperation between VA and the Department of Defense on the treatment of injured service members, and I will pursue the situation at Walter Reed and other military treatment facilities that are handling the bulk of returning Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans to ensure the Government is helping those who have been injured in service to our country and their families.

I wish to highlight a few of the accounts for which we are seeking substantial increases.

In our estimate, we recommended an additional \$300 million for treatment of traumatic brain injuries. These funds will support the expansion of VA's capacity and will help to resolve case management problems identified in an IG investigation last summer. Traumatic brain injuries are turning out to be the hallmark of this war. We simply must ensure that VA has the resources to do more than just keep up but to become a leader in brain injury care.

The recent televised account of ABC newsman Bob Woodruff's long recovery from a brain injury endured in Iraq has highlighted the suffering of new veterans and their families. Looking at these young soldiers with such devastating injuries reminds us of the true costs of war.

We know the transition from DOD to VA can be a tough one. This is even more true for those veterans suffering with TBI. At the start of this war, VA was unprepared to deal with returning service members with injuries of all kinds. The budgets in the early years underestimated these costs, and many VA facilities were caught flatfooted.

Over the last year, VA has made strides in improving the lead brain injury centers. Yet VA still has miles to go in caring for service members when they return home to their communities. Many of these men and women are quite young and will live with brain injuries for the rest of their lives. VA must do more than simply send them back to their communities.

I am also concerned that veterans with less severe forms of TBI may not be receiving appropriate compensation for their injuries. We need to make sure VA has the resources necessary to provide for specialist examinations and appropriate testing so that veterans who file claims for headaches, memory loss, and other effects of TBI may be properly compensated and rehabilitated.

We also recommended an increase of \$693 million over the administration's request for VA mental health programs. These funds are essential to guarantee timely access to mental health services for veterans of the global war on terror and prior conflicts, including the Vietnam war. We have heard too many stories already of veterans in crisis who were unable to see a mental health professional because of a lack of staff or beds at VA facilities. It is about time we fully fund VA's mental health programs so that not one more troubled veteran finds himself or herself on the street for lack of therapy, counseling or, far worse, takes his or her own life.

As chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am deeply committed to having all in Congress recognize the reality that meeting the needs of veterans is truly part of the ongoing costs of war. I urge my fellow Senators to join us as we work to uphold our end of the bargain by giving our Nation's veterans accessible first-rate medical care. We owe it to them and they deserve it.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. McCASKILL). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 30 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

#### VA HEALTH CARE

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, this morning in the Washington Post newspaper, there is a story that is headlined:

*It Is Just Not Walter Reed. Soldiers Share Troubles Stories of Military Health Care Across the U.S.*

I read that story and have read the previous stories in the Washington Post about the issue of outpatient health care at Walter Reed. I have visited Walter Reed many times, and I have visited Bethesda many times, and I have visited with wounded soldiers. I have spoken to doctors and nurses, health care professionals, people who work at Walter Reed and Bethesda. I

have to tell my colleagues that I come away from those experiences thinking how unbelievably dedicated the people who are working in those hospitals are to save lives. There are a lot of them. I hope the efforts and the work they do tirelessly 24 hours a day are not in any way diminished by these stories.

The stories the Post has published are accurate. The stories about the outpatient buildings at Walter Reed needing repair and not being repaired are accurate. The stories about the system well beyond Washington, DC, are accurate stories. But I would say there are a lot of dedicated people working in that system who are trying to do the best they can to work as hard as they can work to save lives and help our veterans. Their role needs to be understood and applauded as well.

Even as I say that, let me describe something else. As the headline says: "It Is Just Not Walter Reed." It was over a month ago I was on the floor of the Senate, and what brought me to the floor of the Senate to talk about these issues was this story in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. The story says in the headline:

This Marine's Death Came After He Served in Iraq. When Jonathan Schulze came home from Iraq, he tried to live a normal life, but the war kept that from happening.

The story talks about this young man who went to Iraq when America asked him to go fight for his country, was engaged in some bitter, difficult fighting, and when he came back from Iraq, he had very serious problems; very significant, serious difficulties, and he couldn't deal with them. As they buried this young man who committed suicide, on his casket was recognition of his two Purple Hearts earned from his service in Iraq. He was a real soldier in some of the bloodiest battles of Iraq. I have spoken to his family and they told me of this young man seeing the head of one of his best friends being blown off, some of the most unbelievable things a person can see in battle. He came back from Iraq with very serious problems. He tried very hard to get those problems resolved. He was in and out of the VA system. This story describes his circumstances.

I happened to be in Minneapolis the day this story was published in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. It was on a Saturday. When I came back to Washington, DC, the following week, I came to the floor of the Senate and said I was going to write the inspector general with a request: Would you investigate what has happened here? This is a man, according to this story and according to his family with whom I have spoken, who went to the VA system and said: I am suicidal. I have been thinking about committing suicide. I need help.

In fact, the second time he went to the VA system asking to be admitted to the hospital, he had packed his bags and brought them with him, hoping to be admitted. His family, standing be-

hind him during the interview at the hospital, heard him tell them he was suicidal. They said: We can't do a prescreening for you today. You will have to come back. The family had driven some 70, 75 miles to get there that day. The next day he called and was told he is No. 26 on the list to be admitted. Three days later he hung himself.

This young man fought for his country, came back seeking help, and he didn't get the help. So they had a funeral for this young man, Jonathan Schulze, who cried out for help and didn't get it. At the funeral was a picture of this young marine with his two Purple Hearts, a proud young man who served his country with great valor and great distinction. But his country didn't serve him very well when he came back with very serious problems.

I came to the floor of the Senate and said I was sending the inspector general a request that he investigate what has happened here. What happened when this young man goes to a hospital and says: I am thinking of committing suicide, I need to be admitted to your hospital, and is turned away? How does that happen? Is it an isolated instance?

Last week a mother called me. She told me her son had come back from Iraq and he had very serious problems. They went to the VA hospital. This is a young man coming back from soldiering in Iraq with very serious emotional problems, a substance abuse addiction, he couldn't sleep, and at night would pull the covers over his head and scream, wake up from nightmares. So they went to the VA system and his mother said: We really didn't get much help. They had very limited capability to help; not enough staff. So she said: We worked through the private sector with some psychiatrists and others for a year, and my son finally improved and got much, much better, after a long year. She called me last week because she said her son had received an alert notice that his unit was to be activated in June, likely to go back to Iraq. That is why that mother was calling me. But her message was in many ways about the issue of care in the VA system. Let me say again, I have great admiration for a lot of men and women who work in that system. I think there are a lot of soldiers who get some good help. But I do think the VA is understaffed. I don't think there is much question about that. I think very significant mistakes are made when there are not the resources to help.

When this young man comes back from Iraq, Jonathan Schulze, who earns two Purple Hearts and cries out for help and this country doesn't help because somehow he falls through the cracks—he goes to the hospital and says: I need to be admitted, I am thinking of committing suicide—and they send him home, there is something dreadfully wrong. Yes, the Washington Post was right this morning; this is not just about Iraq; this is not just about Walter Reed. This is also about the VA

system, and whether this President is asking for enough funding for that system.

I was reading the transcript this morning of a hearing that Senator AKAKA, who just spoke, recently chaired. He asked about the President's budget that proposes a cut to inpatient care for mental health in the VA system. That is exactly the wrong thing to do. It is precisely the wrong direction to go.

I received a letter from the inspector general 3 days after I had written to him, on February 9. He writes this:

In response to your letter, my office has opened an inquiry and will provide you with the results upon completion.

So the inspector general is now investigating.

Let me also say I worry about the leadership there. I don't know what causes this, but here is what the head of the VA said at the Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on February 13. He says:

There is no veteran who is in need of, as I say, emergent or emergency care that doesn't get it immediately.

Let me say that again. This is a quote from Mr. Nicholson, who runs the VA system:

There is no veteran who is in need of, as I say, emergent or emergency care that doesn't get it immediately.

Well, Jonathan Schulze didn't get it. He showed up with his bags packed and told the VA he was thinking of committing suicide and needed to be admitted, and he was sent home. He didn't get the help. That was emergency help that was needed. I don't understand how the Secretary can say this. Clearly there are soldiers around the country who are released from inpatient care at Walter Reed and Bethesda, who transfer out of the active-duty system and become a veteran, and all of a sudden the standard of care, the standard of rehabilitation is different. That is quite clear. That is not in dispute. That shouldn't be the case. We spend hundreds of billions of dollars going to war. There is no difference between a soldier on active duty and a wounded soldier who comes back home and leaves the acute care facility of Walter Reed or Bethesda. There is no difference, and they ought not be treated differently. Their standard of care ought to be identical. I don't understand a circumstance where the head of the VA says:

There is no one in need of, as I say, emergent or emergency care that doesn't get it immediately.

That is clearly not accurate. He is the Secretary and should know it is not accurate. I do not understand it. As I have indicated, I asked the inspector general to investigate the Jonathan Schulze situation, this young man who committed suicide, took his life when he showed up with his bags packed, asking to be admitted to the hospital. I hope what has happened recently will persuade the President, the Secretary, the Congress to get this right. We owe

it to those young men and women. The number of people coming back—24,900 American servicemen have been wounded, 11,200 seriously. Virtually all of us here have seen those soldiers lying seriously wounded. Does anyone think they don't have the highest claim on this country's resources to reach out and help them with everything that is available to us? Does anyone believe there is something more important than that? If so, I want to know what it is. I hope very much, whether it is the Jonathan Schulze case or any of the other cases, this investigation is thorough, complete, urgent, and is completed in a way that says to this President: You can't seriously continue to consider cutting in-patient care for mental health in the VA system.

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AMENDMENT NO. 313 TO S. 4

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I want to talk briefly about an amendment I have offered to the underlying piece of legislation.

I would like to ask it be considered in morning business as a separate subject. I have offered an amendment that is very simple. It calls for a report every 6 months by this administration on the subject of what is happening with respect to the search for Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida. I hope I will get a vote on that amendment perhaps this afternoon, and if not, I hope by tomorrow. That amendment was one I offered last week. I want to show a couple of charts that describe why I have offered such an amendment.

Mr. Negroponte was the Director of National Intelligence until about two weeks ago. He and the current leader of the intelligence service have said the same thing in open testimony before the Congress:

Al-Qaida is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests, including to the homeland.

He also said this:

Al-Qaida continues to plot attacks against our homeland and other targets with the objective of inflicting mass casualties. And they continue to maintain active connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders from a secure hideout in Pakistan.

Again, it says from their secure hideout in Pakistan. On September 15, 2001, 4 days after 9/11, recognizing it was al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaida leadership that attacked this country and boasted about it, the President said this:

We will not only deal with those who dare attack Americans; we will deal with those who harbor them and feed them and house them.

Two months later he said:

As a part of our offensive against terror, we are also confronting the regimes that harbor and support terrorists.

Two months following that he said:

Osama bin Laden has no place to train his al-Qaida killers anymore. And if we find a training camp, we will take care of it.

Well, the head of intelligence for this country says he knows where the al-Qaida leadership is. We saw last week film clips on television of al-Qaida training camps. Yet somehow there is a giant yawn about all of this. In fact, the President later said, in 2003:

I don't know where bin Laden is. I have no idea and really don't care. It is not important, and it is not our priority.

He also said:

I am not truly that concerned about him.

If the head of intelligence for this country says the greatest threat posed to this country by a terrorist organization is a threat that comes from al-Qaida, a threat to our homeland to inflict mass casualties, and they are in a secure hideout in Pakistan, and if, in fact, the President previously said as a part of our offensive against terror we are also confronting the regimes that harbor and support terrorists, and if Pakistan is our ally and al-Qaida is located there to train new terrorists, why on Earth are we not going after the leadership of al-Qaida? What explains that? It, frankly, escapes me.

I have introduced a piece of legislation that does three things: First, every 6 months, there will be a report from this administration to the Congress—a classified report—telling us where is the al-Qaida leadership. If they now say they are in a secure hideout in Pakistan, they can reaffirm that; and, if not, where are they?

Second, tell us each country where bin Laden, Zawahiri, and other leadership may be and whether the government of each country is cooperating with our attempts to capture them. If these countries are allies, are they harboring these terrorists, preventing us from the opportunity to go and eliminate the leadership of this terrorist organization?

Third, this report will require the heads of our intelligence and of our Defense Department to tell us what additional resources they need to capture the leadership of al-Qaida.

Today, it is 2,001 days—let me mark that—since the terrorist attack against our country which murdered thousands of innocent Americans. Osama bin Laden, Zawahiri, and others in al-Qaida boasted about being the perpetrators of that terrorist attack. That was 9/11/2001.

Coincidentally, today is 2,001 days later. The perpetrators who boasted that they committed the terrorist acts against our country that murdered so many thousands of Americans remain, apparently, in a secure hideout in Pakistan and still taunt us. They send the television and the radio stations their videos and their voice tracks telling us their views of world events.

I have said before on the floor of the Senate in recent weeks, if we have 21,000 soldiers to surge somewhere, I would much prefer those 21,000 soldiers be surged to find the leadership and eliminate the leadership of al-Qaida. I don't understand why this administration says: We don't know where he is. I

have no idea and really don't care. It is not that important. It is not our priority.

That comes from the President. But his top intelligence chief says they are in a secure hideout in Pakistan. Even more important, I don't understand when the President says he is not concerned about him. The top intelligence chief said this is the greatest threat to our country. We better be concerned about him—the President and the Congress and the American people. We ought to be concerned enough to decide this is a priority; it is a priority for us to bring to justice those who are the greatest threat to our country, the greatest terrorist threat.

That doesn't come from me. That comes from Mr. Negroponte and his successor who, in the last 2 months, both said the greatest terrorist threat to our country is al-Qaida. They continue to plot attacks against our homeland with the objective of inflicting mass casualties, and they radiate outward from their leaders from a secure hideout in Pakistan. It is unbelievable to me that 2,001 days later that we saw, according to the New York Times 2 weeks ago, "Terror Officials See Qaeda Chiefs Regaining Power."

Senior leaders of al-Qaida operating from Pakistan over the last year have set up a band of training camps in the tribal regions near the Afghan border, according to American intelligence and counterterrorism officials. American officials said there was mounting evidence that Osama bin Laden and his deputy, al-Zawahiri, have been steadily building an operations hub in the mountainous Pakistani tribal area of north Waziristan.

I don't have the foggiest idea how this is allowed to continue or to happen. In fact, my colleague and I—Senator CONRAD and I—offered an amendment similar to this some months ago. It was dropped in conference. Senator CONRAD joins me as a cosponsor of this amendment this time as well. Both of us believe there is something missing. When we offered it the last time, there was this enormous concern about our offering it. It seems to me that this just makes common sense—find out what is the most significant threat to our country and take steps to eliminate that threat.

This country took its eye off the issue of Afghanistan. All of us understand that, regrettably. I worry about what might happen in Afghanistan this year. We took our eye off this issue. Osama bin Laden—you haven't heard his name around here for a long while. It was Osama "been forgotten." Nobody talked about him. Even the President said: I don't know where he is. I don't care. It is not important, and it is not our priority.

What on Earth is that? I don't understand it. This amendment is simple. We are asking for three steps. Every 6 months we would like a report. What are you doing? What is the progress in dealing with the greatest terrorist threat to this country? Don't tell us that we don't have time or resources to