

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 up to 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the first half of the time under the control of the Republicans, and the second half of the time under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Missouri.

IRAQ

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I am pleased to report to my colleagues on a trip, an Intelligence Committee trip, that I led to Iraq this past weekend, with Senators SNOWE and CHAMBLISS and Congressman ISSA. We found some very amazing things. We visited Tikrit, Baghdad, Ramadi, Balad. We talked to the commanding officers, sat down and talked with our troops, our soldiers, marines, and airmen.

In Ramadi—which only a month or so ago had been a denied area, an area so hostile that heavily armed U.S. units could not even successfully go in. It was extremely dangerous. On Sunday, as a result of changes that have happened in Ramadi in the last several weeks, the four of us Members of Congress, with the general in charge of the area, General Gaskin, and a driver, and two marines with M-16s, went down to downtown Baghdad. We had no phalanx of troops around us, no helicopters flying overhead. We got out and walked in downtown Baghdad at “Firecracker Corner,” so named, as one might guess, because of the tremendous number of rounds that perpetually were going off in that area.

It was quiet at the time. We went from there into the former Anbar college, which has become the security force headquarters for the area. That building is manned by Iraqi police units, Iraqi army units, and U.S. marines. They were living together, conducting missions together, and apparently they have been extremely successful because Ramadi has changed significantly.

In the last 3 months, attacks in Ramadi have decreased by some 74 percent. I have a chart in the Chamber. You probably cannot see it too well. But the first part shows weekly attacks going from a high of 127, in February, down to 24 in the week of April 20 to 26.

Indirect fire attacks went from 129 per week down to about 10. Improvised explosive device attacks—this is per month—went from over 320 last July, down to, in March, 67 per month; and in April to 28 per month.

Now, what is going on here? Well, it is quite simply that the surge and

clear-and-hold counterinsurgency strategy is beginning to work. The mistake we made previously is we would go in and take out al-Qaida and leave. Well, al-Qaida would come right back. And anybody who had cooperated with the coalition forces would be subjected to death or other severe penalties.

Now, with significant new numbers of Iraqi police and army, backed up by the U.S. military, we are able to go in and clear and hold. That is why the marines, the Iraqi police, and army are stationed in downtown Baghdad. This is becoming—it is not yet a denied zone for al-Qaida.

Now, one of the most important and amazing things that has happened is the tribal sheiks, the Sunnis in that area—if you have been following the Al Anbar progress, the Sunni sheiks run that country. They have concluded—having dealt with al-Qaida, and having had their family members killed, businesses disrupted—they have decided that the coalition forces—American, Australian, British—in cooperation with the Iraqi Army and police are far better hopes for security.

By our making a commitment to go in there, they have made a commitment as well. Now they are volunteering large numbers of men to serve in the Iraqi police and the Iraqi Army.

In just a couple weeks, 1,200 Iraqi young men signed up for the army. There are now over 10,000 Iraqi policemen. They are being trained, and they are taking over the area.

As you look at the entire scope of Ramadi, there are 23 tribal areas. Last year, in one or two of the tribal areas, the sheiks were working with us. Now all 23 have joined with us to fight al-Qaida. There are no uncooperative tribes left. They are joining the military and the police force to help keep the area clear.

In downtown Ramadi, the U.S. military has gone in and been able to repair and help reopen the largest, most important mosque in Ramadi, the mosque that is central for the Sunnis in Al Anbar. It had been closed since the start of the war. Now, this past Friday, hundreds of Iraqis were able to attend services. The U.S. military has supplied and set up mosque speakers in Ramadi to broadcast security messages in addition to messages from the local Imams.

This is just one example we saw. In Baghdad, we learned the clear-and-hold strategy is working. Areas which had been highly dangerous, with a high number of attacks daily, now, because of the presence of the joint security forces—Iraqi, U.S., and coalition forces—have seen the incidents decline by more than two-thirds.

What does this mean? Well, it means al-Qaida is being significantly degraded. Significant numbers of al-Qaida have been killed and detained, and others have been forced out of Baghdad and Al Anbar. Our coalition forces, with the help of the Iraqi military, are, I understand, doing a very

good job tracking them down and eliminating them.

Now, this is not conclusive. This is only the first results of the surge and the effective counterinsurgency strategy. It was recommended by the Baker-Hamilton commission last year, and it is being implemented by General Petraeus, who is an expert on counterinsurgency.

I would say that Marine General Gaskin, who is running Al Anbar, is doing a magnificent job. I was impressed with what we heard from General Odierno and General McCrystal and others who are working to make sure they complete their job.

We also met with the most influential leader of the Shia in Iraq, Ayatollah Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. He is the influential leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. We talked with him about the need for the Iraqis to find political solutions and to bring together a unity government of Sunnis, Kurds, and Shias to ensure the safety and stability of their country so they would have an opportunity to go back to normal lives and prosper. We have given them that opportunity, and they need to take that opportunity. We need to do a better job of telling people the difference, and our military is doing that. But at the same time, when we met with our troops, they kept asking us why we aren't getting the money. They know they are doing the job, and they asked us a question which is rather difficult to answer: You sent us over here to do a military mission. We are accomplishing that mission. Why are we not getting the money we need? Where are the Mine Resistant Ambush Protection vehicles that can reduce injuries and deaths so significantly? There was no answer, other than it has been delayed.

Let me conclude by saying we are making great progress, and we cannot afford to tell our troops we are not going to support them by sending in a bifurcated budget, funding a month at a time, a month at a time, because they have a several months' long game plan. When they hear people say that the war is lost, they say: We are risking our lives every day, because the war is not lost. What are people in Congress thinking? We cannot tell the Iraqis and our troops that we are going to cut out of here in a couple of months because we will lose the cooperation of the tribal sheiks and the others who are helping us against al-Qaida if they think we are about ready to leave and leave them at the mercy of al-Qaida, which will come back in if we leave prior to establishing strength in the Iraqi security forces that will enable them to prevent al-Qaida from taking over their country.

Make no mistake about it, that is the goal of al-Qaida. Our intelligence community unanimously says it. Ayman al-Zawahiri has said it, Osama bin Laden has said it. If we don't believe them, at least we ought to believe our intelligence community.

We must pass this supplemental for the full rest of the year without timelines and provide the troops the support and the weapons systems they need.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, may I inquire how much time is remaining in morning business on this side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 18½ minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Chair. I will take 9 minutes of that and then Senator THOMAS will take the remainder.

RISING GAS PRICES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday I came to the floor with the Senator from Arizona and the senior Senator from Texas to talk about rising gas prices. The sticker shock at the pump is something all Americans are noticing. We can talk in esoteric sorts of ways about national energy policy, but when people drive up and have to fill up their tank to be able to drive their kids to school or be able to drive to work, that is when they begin to understand the consequences of Congress's failure to act in a number of respects.

Last year about this time, our friends on the other side of the aisle held a press conference over on Massachusetts Avenue and were decrying the lack of action on the part of the then majority of Congress to bring down gasoline prices, but since that time, the average retail price of gasoline has gone up by 13 cents. I saw in today's day book for the Associated Press that the new majority, the Democratic majority is now going to have another press conference over at the same gas station talking about high gas prices.

I would suggest the responsibilities of being in the majority are to act, not just to hold press conferences. I think our friends haven't quite recognized the fact that they are in charge now. They have a responsibility to act instead of using the same old shop-worn tactics of holding a press conference and launching new investigations.

In fact, the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice have held extensive investigations already and basically concluded the problem is we don't have adequate supply, and we don't have adequate refinery capacity to keep up with the demand. As I noted yesterday, Congress can pass a lot of laws. We could even repeal some laws, but we can't repeal the laws of supply and demand. We know that in a booming world economy, where there is competition in India and China, countries with more than a billion people each, as the economies of other countries become more developed, they are going to demand more and more of the same limited supply of oil, and that is why we have seen the price of oil and gasoline go up. Rather than hold press conferences, my hope is our colleagues

on the other side of the aisle, the new majority who is in charge, would work with us to pass legislation which would actually have an impact and bring down gasoline prices, bring down oil prices, and enhance our national security at the same time.

It is no secret to any of us that most—or not most but a lot of the oil that we import comes from troubled regions of the world. It comes from Hugo Chavez and Venezuela, it comes from the Middle East, and I don't need to say more about that and how much that supply is threatened at times by the bellicose actions of countries such as Iran, a rising, they hope, nuclear power. I hope they do not acquire nuclear capacity because they are a State sponsor of international terrorism. But my point is we need to develop more of our domestic resources. We need to look for alternative forms of energy that are clean. We need to continue our scientific research into things such as clean coal-burning technology. We have about 300 years' supply of coal in this country, and we all know that coal can burn dirty, but the fact is that by using the technological advantages that we have in this country, we can conduct the kind of research that will allow us to use this coal in a way that does not pollute and does not endanger the environment. The fact is we simply can't turn a blind eye to any source of energy and remain competitive in the world economy. But the fact is also that we are simply not going to solve these problems by holding press conferences, as our colleagues are going to do, apparently, this afternoon, I think at 2:30 or 3:30. I can't remember when. They did that last year when they were in the minority. They have not quite yet, I guess, accepted the fact that on November 7 they won the election and they are now responsible. It means more than holding press conferences; it means action.

I tell my colleagues the Republicans are willing, ready, and able to work with them to try to solve the energy crisis, the gasoline price crisis in this country. It is not going to be easy, but for sure, none of us can do it in a partisan way. The only way we are going to be able to do it is by working together in the best interests of the American people. I think the American people are more than a little tired of some of the hollow rhetoric when people talk about problems, but when you are in a position to actually do something about it, that nothing gets done.

As our leader on this side of the aisle, Senator MCCONNELL, has noted, divided Government actually provides an opportunity for us to take on some of these big problems, some of these big challenges that are harder to tackle when there is a single party in charge, but it takes a spirit of cooperation. It takes a desire to actually work together to try to solve these problems the best we can. The energy problem is just one of them. I would say the spiraling debt being accumulated by

growth and entitlement programs is another one of them.

I am very disappointed that this new budget that is going to come to the floor later this week does nothing about passing the buck on entitlement spending. As a matter of fact, it imposes additional debt and burden on our children and grandchildren when we have the responsibility to pay our own bills, not use Social Security to pay for the general debt, which we are doing now, and other bookkeeping tactics that if we were in the private sector would probably mean that somebody would end up in jail. But the Federal Government plays those sorts of budget gimmicks, and they need to end.

So let me end by saying that this is an opportunity for us to work together but not if we are going to have press conferences and do nothing, talk tough but fail to use the tools that are available to us in Congress as representatives of our respective States to work together in a bipartisan way to try to solve them. I think that is what the American people want. That is why I came to the Senate. I wanted to do something. I wanted to actually make a difference. I think all of us feel roughly the same way, but somehow we have fallen into these bad habits of partisanship and avoiding the solutions that are readily at hand.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I wish to join my friend from Texas in talking about the interest in energy. I don't think there is anything, frankly, when we look at it, that impacts our future and our jobs and our families anymore than energy and its availability. Think about it for a moment, what we actually use, each of us, every day. We drove here in our cars: energy; the lights up here: energy; air-conditioning or heat: energy; then, of course, in the whole economy. So I wanted to talk about some of it in the context of high gas prices and, of course, Americans are experiencing that right now.

I am on the Energy Committee, and we have passed good energy policy in the last couple years. We have already begun to see some of the benefits of that passage, there is no question about that, but there is much more that can be done. Unfortunately, we have gone along a good deal of the time this year and haven't done much about it, so we need to accomplish some things. The high price of gas, of course, touches all of us, but it is particularly important in a State such as mine, where people have to travel so far for school or work or other obligations.

Yesterday, the Energy Committee, of which I am a member, scheduled a hearing on short-term energy outlook for oil and gas. This hearing will be held next week, but that is not enough. Having hearings is not enough, as having press conferences is not enough. We need to move forward.