

Incredibly, cars in America today get less mileage per gallon than they did 20 years ago. Meanwhile, hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and fully electric cars are at or nearly at commercialization, yet there is not enough incentive for consumers to buy them or producers to make them on the mass scale necessary. For fiscal year 2008, the administration requested just \$176 million for new vehicle technology research—an amount that was less than what was requested 5 years ago.

Given that other developed nations have made great strides in improving fuel economy, this is fertile ground for rapid improvement. In fact, achievements on this front largely would be a matter of generating and sustaining political will that has, thus far, been disappointing.

The issue before us is whether we will refocus our policy in Iraq on realistic assessments of what can be achieved, and on a sober review of our vital interests in the Middle East. Given the requirements of military planners, the stress of our combat forces, and our own domestic political timeline, we are running out of time to implement a thoughtful plan B that attempts to protect our substantial interests in the region, while downsizing our military presence in Iraq.

We need to recast the geo-strategic reference points of our Iraq policy. We need to be preparing for how we will array U.S. forces in the region to target terrorist enclaves, deter adventurism by Iran, provide a buffer against regional sectarian conflict, and generally reassure friendly governments that the United States is committed to Middle East security. Simultaneously, we must be aggressive and creative in pursuing a regional dialogue that is not limited to our friends. We cannot allow fatigue and frustration with our Iraq policy to lead to the abandonment of the tools and relationships we need to defend our vital interests in the Middle East.

If we are to seize opportunities to preserve these interests, the administration and Congress must suspend what has become almost knee-jerk political combat over Iraq. Those who offer constructive criticism of the surge strategy are not defeatists, any more than those who warn against a precipitous withdrawal are militarists. We need to move Iraq policy beyond the politics of the moment and reestablish a broad consensus on the role of the United States in the Middle East. If we do that, the United States has the diplomatic influence and economic and military power to strengthen mutually beneficial policies that could enhance security and prosperity throughout the region. I pray that the President and the Congress will move swiftly and surely to achieve that goal.

IRAQ

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I would like to say a word about the remarks just made by my colleague from Indiana, Senator LUGAR. It has been my honor to serve with Senator LUGAR now for 11 years. I count him as a friend, as a valued colleague, as a neighbor in the Midwest.

I believe the speech which he has just made on the floor of the Senate is in the finest tradition of the Senate, like its author. Senator LUGAR's speech was thoughtful, thorough, and honest. It was a challenge to all of us on both sides of the aisle, Democrat and Republican alike: To step back from the debate on Iraq, take an inventory of where we are, make an honest appraisal, and move forward.

I think it is a challenge to all Senators. I am sorry it was delivered at the time of night when few of our colleagues were here, but if we are fortunate some followed it on C-SPAN as Senator LUGAR presented it.

I made notes during the course of the speech. I am sure I have missed some valuable and important things that Senator LUGAR said, but I will just tell you that I do not disagree with his conclusion. I believe, as he does, that the factionalism in Iraq has reached catastrophic proportions, that it is doubtful they will be able to patch together in the near term the government which we had hoped for.

I agree with Senator LUGAR completely about the fatigue of our military. We have the greatest military in the world, the best and bravest, not only in Indianapolis but in Springfield, IL, and all across the Nation. We are so proud of these men and women and what they fight for and the representation of our great Nation.

I think Senator LUGAR hit the nail on the head when he said the strongest fighting force in the world is not indestructible. We are pushing them to the absolute limit, and that is a reality.

His third point about the timetable of our debate is a valuable one. Some wonder if there are members of the administration who are waiting for the clock to run out, the day to come when they leave Washington to turn this issue over to another. That would be a serious mistake, because in the meantime we know that American lives will be lost and opportunities may be squandered.

That point was made very effectively by Senator LUGAR this evening. I made some notes of things he said that I believe summarize our situation so effectively. He said that a course change should happen now. He called for a sustainable, bipartisan strategy in dealing with Iraq. He called for a rational course adjustment that must be initiated very soon. He said that far more important than just Iraq are our Middle Eastern goals that are languishing because of our current strategy.

I could not agree with him more on the four points he set out as our Middle Eastern objectives to keep Iraq from becoming a terrorist haven, to stop

Iraq from spreading instability into the region, to prevent Iranian dominance of the region, and to limit the loss of U.S. credibility in the region as a result of this war.

I think he is correct in his analysis. He said that the current surge strategy is not effective. He believes, as I do, at this moment in time total withdrawal is not consistent with our regional goals. I want to bring American troops home as quickly as possible, as many as possible.

We have said from the beginning on the Democratic side that there are certain responsibilities we must still accept in that region: To stop the spread of al-Qaida terrorism, to make certain the Iraqis, as best we can, are prepared to fight this battle, and to protect our own forces during the withdrawal.

He called for downsizing to more sustainable positions, to put our troops in a position where they can respond if necessary. He called for attempts to end imposing our forces between sectarian warring factions. That, I believe, is our highest priority. To think that our men and women in uniform are now caught in the crossfire of a civil war with its origins 14 centuries ago in a sectarian battle is just unacceptable.

He said the longer we delay plans for redeployment, the less likely it will be successful. I could not agree with him more. He called for a tactical drawdown of U.S. troops to make diplomatic efforts more likely to succeed.

I agree with Senator LUGAR when he said we are running out of time; we have to move the Iraqi policy between the politics of the moment. He said the administration and Congress must suspend knee-jerk political combat over Iraq.

Forty years ago as a law school student, I came and sat in that gallery in a chair and watched as Senator Robert Kennedy came to the floor to give a speech on Vietnam. He walked through those doors with his brother, Senator TED KENNEDY. Their families were in the gallery. He stood on this floor, again, in the evening hours after most Senators had gone home. He spoke about bringing the war in Vietnam to a close. It was an important speech in the history of our Nation and certainly in the history of the Senate, and I think it made a difference. I believe the speech that was given tonight by my colleague from Indiana, Republican Senator RICHARD LUGAR, is that kind of speech. I think it is the starting point for a meaningful debate, a debate which looks at the Middle East in a new context and in a realistic context, and realizes that it is time to change direction in our course in Iraq.

I salute my colleague. I hope every Member of the Senate tomorrow will ask for a copy of the speech from the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, read it carefully, and then come to this floor when we return after the Fourth of July break and begin our debate over the Defense authorization bill, and realize

that during the course of that debate we can reach across the aisle on a bi-partisan basis and make a difference.

I thank Senator LUGAR for his contribution to this most important issue which challenges us today.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8:48 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, June 26, 2007, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nomination received by the Senate June 25, 2007:

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

JIM NUSSLE, OF IOWA, TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, VICE ROBERT J. PORTMAN.

WITHDRAWAL

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on June 25, 2007 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

WILLIAM W. MERCER, OF MONTANA, TO BE ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL, VICE ROBERT D. MCCALLUM, JR., WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON JANUARY 9, 2007.