

and elsewhere, the major threat to the United States has the same name and the same basic look at 2001: al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, plotting attacks from mountain hide-outs near the Afghan-Pakistani border.

The intelligence report, the most formal assessment since the September 11 attacks about the terrorist threat facing the United States, concludes that the United States is losing ground on a number of fronts in the fight against al-Qaida and describes the terrorist organization as having "significantly strengthened over the past two years."

If ever we needed good leadership, thoughtful leadership, leadership that will act on the facts and understand the facts and not misrepresent the facts, it is now, at a time when a terrorist organization is planning additional attacks against this country. For this administration to say that things are fine, we are winning, don't worry, and there is a sovereign, apparently, safe haven for the leadership for those who plan to attack us, that is unbelievable, and it must change. If the administration won't change it, the Congress and the American people must change it.

#### COMPETENT LEADERSHIP

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, a number of us have been concerned about the issue of competence for some long while. I take no pleasure in coming to the floor to point out someone's flaws or weaknesses or areas where we are not succeeding, but it seems to me that this country has to be brutally honest with itself, and that includes this administration, in terms of what it is doing, how well, what kinds of changes are necessary to fix what is wrong to safeguard and provide security for this country.

One of the examples of serious trouble with respect to solving problems and addressing issues was the response to Hurricane Katrina. This devastating hurricane hit our country, and it laid bare a whole area of the gulf coast. It was unbelievable what it did to families, homes, and structures. The consequences of it and the cost of it and its toll on human lives and treasure are not even yet calculated.

I think everybody in this country saw what happened as a result of the response of FEMA. I come from a State in which flooding 10 years ago caused the evacuation of a city of 50,000 people—the largest evacuation of an American city since the Civil War. We understand FEMA. They rushed in in the middle of that unbelievable flood in the Red River, where almost the entire city of Grand Forks, ND, was evacuated. FEMA rushed in. Under James Lee Witt, it had become a world-class organization. It did an unbelievable job. I cannot say enough about that organization. FEMA was first rate. I think everybody in that city who was helped by that organization understood the quality of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Fast forward and discover that the major appointments to FEMA under

this administration were political cronies who had no experience in emergency response or preparedness. So it wasn't surprising that FEMA deteriorated dramatically as an agency, and its response to Hurricane Katrina was abysmal.

I want to describe it with one photograph, if I might. This describes what happened with respect to Katrina. I am describing this because this week something happened that finally ended the chapter on this sorry story. This man is Paul Mullinax, sitting in front of an 18-wheel truck in Florida. His truck is a refrigerated truck, and it is used to haul ice. Katrina hit, and one of the needs in the deep South, when people and property and everything was devastated and they were trying to figure out how to deal with it, they needed ice in the middle of that scorching heat. So FEMA contracted with truckers to haul ice in 18-wheel trucks, refrigerated trucks, to help the victims of Katrina.

Here is Paul Mullinax in the photo. Paul was in Florida at the time. He got a call and was invited to contract to haul ice. He drove his 18-wheeler to New York City and picked up a load of ice. Let me tell you where he went. I have a map. Paul went from Florida up to New York City to pick up some ice—in Newburg, NY. Then they told him to go to Carthage, MO, with the ice. He went there, to Missouri, to deliver ice. FEMA said, when he got there: No, we want you to go to Montgomery, AL, with your truckload of ice for the victims of Katrina.

Then he got to Montgomery, AL, and here is what happened to him. He, with over 100 other truckers, refrigerated trucks holding ice for the victims of Katrina, sat for 12 days. This is a picture of Paul Mullinax sitting in his lawn chair, with a little grill. For 12 days, he sat there. Finally, they said to him: We want you to take your ice to Massachusetts.

Think of this. Taxpayers paid over \$15,000 for this load of ice. He was told the ice was for the victims of Katrina, and hundreds of other truckers had the same circumstance. He was sent from Missouri to Alabama, sat for a dozen days on the tarmac of a military installation, and then told he should take that ice up to Massachusetts and put it in storage.

This week, 2 years later, after spending over \$20 million, that ice was taken out of storage in Massachusetts and discarded because they felt it was probably contaminated after 2 years. So finally it ends, the saga about hauling ice to the victims of Katrina.

How do I know Paul Mullinax? I asked Paul Mullinax to come to Washington to testify about what happened. He didn't want to do it. I sat in a parking lot of a grocery store one Sunday on the phone with Paul Mullinax and said: Paul, I want you to come to a hearing we are holding to tell this story. People need to understand what is wrong. Only by understanding what is wrong can we get this fixed.

Paul came up to Washington, DC, and testified before a hearing and told us what had happened. Some people wouldn't believe it. You are going to haul ice from New York to Missouri to Mississippi and then are told to offload it at a warehouse in Massachusetts, ice for the victims of Katrina? If there is one story that demonstrates the complete absurd incompetence of the response to Hurricane Katrina, it is the story of Paul Mullinax, a good American who wanted to do the right thing, and in contracting with the Federal agency that was incompetent came up with this absurd experience.

I have tried since to find out who was the decision maker in Government, who decides we are going to haul ice from New York to Massachusetts through Missouri and Mississippi that is supposed to go to victims of Hurricane Katrina, and we are going to spend all of that money and do it incompetently, who was responsible, who made those decisions, and you cannot find out who that unnamed person is who makes that kind of Byzantine decision that in my judgment fleeces the American taxpayer, that injures those who were victims of Hurricane Katrina by not getting the ice to the victims who needed it.

I wanted my colleagues to know, because I have spoken about this before, that this week at last—at long, long last—the ice that was put in storage as a result of this gross incompetence has now been discarded because they felt perhaps after 2 years the ice was contaminated.

It is a sad story, in my judgment, of the fleecing of America. My hope is we have sufficiently embarrassed and sufficiently made accountable those in FEMA and in this administration so that this will never, ever happen again. It is not what the taxpayers deserve, and it certainly isn't what the victims of Hurricane Katrina deserve.

That same incompetence, regrettably, is steeped in other areas of an administration that, as I indicated as of Wednesday morning's interview with Ms. Townsend, seems content to ignore facts.

I have come to the floor on occasion and spoken well of those who I think do a good job in this administration and elsewhere. I wish I could do that this morning. It is very important for this Congress and this country, when we see incompetence and when we see we are developing a strategy that doesn't work and is not going to work, that we must change course, we must expect better.

My hope is a group of us in Congress, through the hearings I have held on these issues and through the discussions of Senator REID and others who have worked on it in our caucus in the last couple of weeks, my hope is that we will change course with respect to the issue of Iraq, for example, which is the overriding important issue.

I hope one of the changes in course will be we decide our priorities are to

fight terrorism first, and that is not what we are now doing. Let us decide to fight terrorism first. That ought to be the goal. If the terrorist camps are reconstituted, if the threat to our country from al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, and al-Zawahiri represents a greater threat now, then we must, it seems to me, change course to address that threat, and that threat requires us to fight terrorism first.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PETE GEREN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I hoped to speak earlier this week when we were engaged in debate on the Defense authorization bill. That was a night, I am sure our Acting President pro tempore recalls, when folks didn't get much sleep around here. A lot of my colleagues decided as they spoke they wanted to speak for a long time. As a result, I suspect fewer than half of us got to speak, and I had just a few thoughts I wanted to share with respect to not just the Defense authorization bill but the war in which we find ourselves in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Before I do that, I wish to mention that I think it was last Friday at the end of the regular business session—maybe it was Thursday—we went through the Executive Calendar. As the Senator from Ohio knows, on the Executive Calendar we actually take up nominations submitted by the committee that need confirmation by the Senate and we deal with those. Oftentimes, if they are not controversial, we deal with them by unanimous consent.

One of the nominations that came before us last week, under unanimous consent, was that of Pete Geren, who had been nominated to be Secretary of the Army. Our Acting President pro tempore spent a number of years in the House of Representatives. I was there 10 years. I think he was there for about as long, maybe even longer.

One of the finest people I ever served with in the House of Representatives was a Democratic Congressman from Texas who actually succeeded Jim Wright. Jim Wright stepped down as our Speaker, resigned from the Congress, there was a special election, and who ended up getting elected but Pete Geren. He became a Congressman for four terms and was admired by Democrats and Republicans alike. Before that, he had served as an aid to a legendary Senator from Texas, a fellow named Lloyd Bentsen, who was also our party's nominee for Vice President.

Pete went to Georgia Tech and the University of Texas. He got a law de-

gree from the University of Texas, married well, had three kids, and ended up here in the Congress with all of us. He resigned after his fourth term and went back to Texas to become a businessperson and to practice law. He did that for I think about 5 years, and lo and behold, he got a call from a Republican administration to ask him to serve in the Department of Defense, where he was a senior aid in the Secretary's office, a role he played for I think about 3 or 4 years.

Subsequent to that, Pete Geren was asked to serve in a variety of roles. He has been our Acting Secretary of the Air Force, he has been the Under Secretary of the Army, the Interim Secretary of the Army, and for the last week or so now, he has been the Secretary of the Army.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD his statement before the Armed Services Committee, his confirmation hearing statement.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Congressional Hearings, June 19, 2007]

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON THE NOMINATION OF PRESTON GEREN TO BE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

GEREN: Mr. Chairman and Senator Warner and members of the committee, it truly is an honor to be before you today as the president's nominee.

I want to thank the president for his confidence in me and Dr. Gates for his confidence, as well. It's truly a privilege to have this opportunity.

Let me thank Senator Hutchison and Senator Cornyn for their very kind remarks, two great leaders for our state and two great leaders in this Senate, and I deeply appreciate, and I know my family did, as well, their kind and generous remarks.

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to note Senator Hutchison's predecessor, who was the person who brought me into public life, Senator Lloyd Bentsen, and had it not been for the opportunity to work for Senator Bentsen, I'm confident I would not have the opportunities to serve in our government today.

Senator Bentsen passed away over the past year, a great American, a great Senator, and I want to acknowledge my debt to him.

Senator, I had introduced my family earlier. I've got, as you do, three wonderful girls, three great kids, and, again, I want to thank them for standing with me and standing with Beckie and me in our time here in Washington and all the time.

My family and I came to Washington planning a three-year hitch and six years later, we're still here.

I joined the Department of Defense in August 2001, expecting a peacetime assignment in business transformation of the Department of Defense. Then came September 11 and the war.

There's a sense of mission working among our military during time of war that's hard to walk away from. For the past six years, I've watched soldiers, sailors and airmen go off to war and I've watched their families stand steadfast and unwavering in their support of their departed loved ones and live with the uncertainty of whether he or she would return home.

And they live with a certainty that there would be birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, graduations and the ups and downs of everyday life that their loved one would miss for

12 months, originally, and now 15 months and too often watch those families live with a loss when their loved one did not return.

I've been inspired by the selfless service of our soldiers and humbled by the sacrifice of their families. I've held staff and leadership jobs in the Pentagon over these past six years and consider it the privilege of a lifetime to have the opportunity to work on behalf of our men and women in our nation's military and their families during the time of war.

Our grateful nation cannot do enough and I'm honored to play a part, a supporting role in their service to our nation on the front lines.

When I came before you seeking confirmation as under secretary of the Army, I told you my top priority would be taking care of soldiers and their families. I reaffirm that commitment today with a greater understanding of that responsibility.

My year as under secretary of the Army taught me much. My four months as acting secretary of the Army has taught me much more.

We have over 140,000 soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. We can never take our eye off of that ball. They're counting on their Army, big Army, to continue to provide them the training, equipment and leadership to take the fight to the enemy and defend themselves.

They count on their Army leadership back home to move the bureaucracy on the home front. They count on their secretary and their chief to stand up for them, get them what they need when they need it.

We must act with urgency every day, every day, to meet their needs. Today, the issue is MRAP. Tomorrow, it will be different. The enemy is forever changing and forever adapting.

Mr. Chairman, further, as an Army, we pledge never to leave a fallen comrade. That is not an abstract notion. That means on the battlefield, in the hospital, or in an outpatient clinic or over a life of dependency, if that is what's required to fulfill this pledge.

I've witnessed the cost in human terms and to the institution of the Army when we break faith with that pledge, as a handful did at Walter Reed. A few let down the many and broke that bond of trust.

But I have seen soldiers, enlisted, NCOs and officers respond when they learned that someone has let down a soldier. They step up and they make it right. They make it better and they do not rest until the job is done and they expect and demand accountability.

And I've seen the strain of multiple deployments on soldiers' families. A wife and mother said recently, "I can hold the family together for one deployment. Two is harder and three is harder still." Over half of our soldiers today are married with families. Over 700,000 children are in the families of our soldiers.

The health of the all volunteer force depends on the health of those families. We must expect that our future offers an era of persistent conflict. We will continue to ask much of the Army family. We must meet the needs of our families, provide them with a quality of life comparable to the quality of their service and sacrifice.

It's the right thing to do and the future of our all volunteer force depends on it.

And as President Lincoln pledged to us as a nation, our duty does not stop when our soldier or our nation leaves the field of battle. We must care for those who have borne the battle, his widow and his orphan.

That commitment extends over the horizon and we have learned we have much to do to fulfill that commitment. Lately, we have come face to face with some of our shortcomings, a complex disability system that