

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

FIVE YEARS OF WAR

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, as we mark the fifth anniversary of the ill-planned and ill-executed war in Iraq, I rise to draw the House's attention to two articles from the Chicago Tribune about the lasting damage done by the conflict.

[From the Chicago Tribune, Mar. 16, 2008]

BY ANY CALCULUS, WAR'S COST CRUEL: POLITICS, MONEY, BLOOD—ALL SHOW A PAINFUL BOTTOM LINE

(By David Greisinger)

It's a cold calculus, trying to estimate the cost of a war.

What is an Iraqi life worth? The life of an American GI? It's no easier estimating the value of removing Saddam Hussein from power than it is calculating the sum cost of lifetime health care for a host of disabled American soldiers.

When politicians talk about the war's costs in terms of lives and treasure, they don't necessarily expect someone to actually pull out a spreadsheet and start running the numbers.

But that is what has happened with the Iraq war. And as we approach the 5-year anniversary of the initial March 20, 2003, "shock and awe" aerial assault on Baghdad, it is worth noting an important shift in the accounting of the conflict's cost.

Those who opposed the war are finding that the costs far exceeded anything they would have expected, or might have argued, at the time the conflict started. The most notable and authoritative such argument is put forward by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, who puts an eye-grabbing, ultimate bottom line on the seemingly endless U.S. commitment to Iraq: at least \$3 trillion. That's trillion, with a "T."

Those who argued during the run-up to war that armed conflict would be more economical than the cost of containing Hussein have shifted fields. Instead of arguing, as some once did, that America's Iraq adventure might actually turn a profit once the country's vast oil wealth began to flow, they now put forward a more nuanced argument.

On a purely fiscal basis, they now acknowledge, the war has been at best a wash. But looked at as a total package—taking into account the benefits of removing a tyrant from power and thrusting Iraq into its post-Hussein period, however bloody and chaotic—they say armed intervention was still the more attractive alternative.

A trio of University of Chicago economists sought to estimate the cost of containing Hussein had there been no U.S.-led invasion. Their 2006 paper pegged it at \$700 billion over an unspecified period of years.

That estimate figures in the extra U.S. military equipment and manpower that would have been needed to keep Hussein within his borders and keep his hands off Kuwait. It includes the cost of weapons inspection programs, of economic boycotts, of oil that would remain in the ground and a rate of premature Iraqi deaths ranging from 10,000

to 30,000 per year, based on Hussein's bloody track record and mismanagement of the country.

"When people talk about the cost of war, as an economist, you have to ask, 'In comparison to what?'" said Kevin Murphy, one of the U. of C. economists.

Though he faults President Bush for errors in execution, he believes war was the better option.

"I don't hear Joe Stiglitz saying the best world is the world where Saddam stays around as long as possible because it costs too much to make him leave," Murphy said.

He has a fair point. Stiglitz spends little time contemplating either the economic or moral consequences of allowing Hussein to remain in power. Perhaps that is because Stiglitz cannot take his eyes off the financial and human catastrophe that is unfolding before the nation's eyes.

Bringing important new scholarship to the book "The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict," Stiglitz and co-author Linda Bilmes spend little time contemplating what-ifs. Instead they turn a calculating eye to the economic consequences of the American military invasion—and to the vital policy considerations presented by both its financial and human costs.

There is the expected, grim accounting that any actuary might calculate. The cost of 4,000 American troops' lives, for example, runs to roughly \$28 billion. War outlays have added \$1 trillion to the national debt, and could run to \$2 trillion over time, the authors calculate.

One of the most important calculations is an aspect of the war often ignored by the politicians and pundits who are not quite as handy with a calculator as Stiglitz is: The staggering, long-term toll of veterans' health care, disability benefits and Social Security disability pay. Add them up, and even in a best-case scenario they amount to \$371 billion, according to the authors' calculations.

Stiglitz expected his calculations would come under criticism, as they have. But he said the larger purpose—putting some price tag on the war—is important.

"The public ought to have some accounting of the costs," he said in an interview.

"Obviously, after Pearl Harbor, you wouldn't sit down and say, 'How are we going to respond?'" Stiglitz said. "But this was a war of choice. We didn't have to go to war. We had a choice of timing, and a choice of whether to go to war at all."

The debate is not purely among economists, obviously. But even among political scientists who supported the war, Stiglitz's view is starting to take hold.

Michael O'Hanlon, a security expert at the Brookings Institution who runs a project that compiles all manner of data on present-day Iraq—from military and civilian deaths to commodity costs to public opinion—said he cannot ignore the negatives: a huge increase in violence in Iraq, the lack of political stability, the inability to find weapons of mass destruction and oil prices at \$110 a barrel.

O'Hanlon supported the initial American invasion, and he gave carefully delineated backing to the troop surge a year ago. Today, though, "common sense ultimately pushes me toward the Stiglitz view if I had to look at just the bottom line," O'Hanlon said.

The question for Americans, ultimately, no longer is whether going to war made sense. Today, as we head toward the presidential election, the question is whether we keep U.S. troops in Iraq or start bringing them back.

Based on governmental budget figures, several economists have put the cost of the Iraq war at \$12 billion a month. Stiglitz figures the actual cost probably is at least twice that.

And putting a final fiscal argument to the test, Stiglitz invokes a tenet of economics that is hammered home at the U. of C. business school itself: The fallacy of the "sunk cost."

People throw good money after bad, in hopes of recovering what they first invested, even though every new dollar just perpetuates a lost cause.

Five years into the war, Americans must decide whether we are caught up in a sunk-cost fallacy. But in this case, the cost is not counted just in dollars and cents. It is tallied in the impact on American security, and in the cost of American and Iraqi lives.

[From the Chicago Tribune, Mar. 19, 2008]

5 YEARS AFTER: FLOWERS, RUINS; IRAQ'S TORN SOCIAL FABRIC MAY BE THE HARDEST ITEM TO MEND AS THE COUNTRY MAKES FITFUL PROGRESS

(By Liz Sly)

BAGHDAD.—On Baghdad's battered streets, signs of the progress made over the past year mingle uneasily with the debris of the violent upheaval that has torn Iraq apart over the past five years.

The ubiquitous concrete blast walls that seal off Sunni and Shiite neighborhoods and protect government buildings serve as a reminder of the ever-present threat of suicide bombings and sectarian violence. But they have been brightly painted with flowers, animals and scenes of Iraqi life, bringing a splash of color to the decrepit, dusty streets.

Freshly planted marigolds bloom along the sidewalks, beside the wreckage of buildings destroyed in air raids and suicide bombings that still have not been rebuilt.

Many shopping streets and markets have sprung back to life, rejuvenated by the improvements in security that have taken place in recent months. In yet other neighborhoods, whole streets have been emptied by the flight of more than 1.1 million Baghdadis from their homes.

Compared with a year ago, the improvements brought about by the surge of an extra 30,000 U.S. troops are manifest. The U.S. military says the violence is down to levels not seen since 2005, permitting a sense of normality to return to many areas.

A BROKEN COUNTRY

But 5 years after the U.S.-led coalition launched the war that was to bring freedom, democracy and prosperity to a long-suffering populace, Iraq remains a broken country, with no clear sense of when, how or even if it is going to be fixed.

U.S. commanders are the first to acknowledge the enormity of the challenges that lie ahead.

"The gains are fragile and they are tenuous and until they are cemented by national reconciliation, by truly resolving the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

big political questions that are necessary, by truly getting the economy going again... until all of that happens, then understandably what has been achieved on the ground will be a bit fragile," Gen. David Petraeus, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, said in an interview.

The statistics tell the story of a nation still a long way from recovery: About 60 percent of Iraqis lack access to clean drinking water, and 4 million don't get enough to eat, according to the United Nations. Electricity is supposed to average 7 hours a day in Baghdad, but many areas still receive only 2 to 3 hours a day. An estimated 151,000 Iraqis have died during the war, as have nearly 4,000 U.S. troops.

And the biggest undertaking of all will be healing the sectarian divide that opened wide and engulfed the country in bloodshed in 2006-07, after the attack on a holy Shiite shrine in Samarra, Petraeus said.

"It did incredible damage to the social structure. I'm talking about the tearing of the fabric of Iraqi society and I think that has probably been the most significant damage that has been sustained," he said. "And that is something that is going to take years."

Whether Iraq has the luxury of years to heal is in question. The extra troops of the "surge" are going home by July, and the U.S. presidential election calls into doubt the future strength of any force that remains.

Meanwhile, the two other factors that contributed to the success of the surge, the Sunni revolt against Al Qaeda in Iraq and the cease-fire declared by the Shiite Mahdi Army militia, cannot be counted on to endure.

Far from ending the civil conflict, the deployment of extra U.S. troops rather served to freeze it.

Neighborhoods have been pacified to a large extent because local feuding factions concluded it was no longer in their interests to continue fighting a beefed-up U.S. force, or in many instances because members of the opposite sect were driven out altogether.

For many, the war's chief legacy has been one of disappointment. "I was expecting to travel the world and now I can't even go to Washash," said Ammar Yahya, 33, referring to a Baghdad neighborhood now controlled by the Mahdi Army.

CONCRETE WALLS

He is a Sunni living in the troubled Dora district, surrounded by the high concrete walls that have helped secure many neighborhoods but which have also left communities isolated. Friends and relatives don't dare visit him, and he is reluctant to leave because most journeys require traveling through Shiite neighborhoods.

"We were so very happy when the Americans came," he said. "Now I wish we had stayed under Saddam's tyranny."

An ABC poll of 2,200 Iraqis conducted for the fifth anniversary showed that 46 percent now expect improvements in the coming year, up from 39 percent last August but still below the 69 percent who were optimistic in November 2005. And 55 percent now say their own lives are going well; that is down from 71 percent in late 2005.

"Give it time," said Said Hakki, a Shiite who returned from exile and now heads the Iraqi Red Crescent Organization. "Security is just beginning to improve. I think the glass is more than half full. We've got cell phones, satellite dishes, and how many new newspapers do we have? Under Saddam, bananas were like a dream."

"Iraq is a war zone. There are many different factions still settling their scores. The Shiites feel the Sunnis were harsh to them

for the past 35 years and they want to get their rights back, but with time and understanding and reconciliation things might change."

But reconciliation is proving elusive. Even the mainstream Sunni National Accord Front, which has seats in Iraq's parliament, refused to attend a "national reconciliation conference" summoned Tuesday by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Many Iraqis question the Shiite-led government's commitment to reconciliation with its former Sunni foes.

"The political leaders have no national vision," said Saad al-Hadithi, a political scientist at Baghdad University. "Their goal is to achieve benefits for their own specific group. This is why they don't want to share power or let anyone else in."

Petracus points to other recent gains, such as signs of improvement in the economy. "The difference over a year ago is very dramatic, there has been very substantial progress," he said. "It does give a sense of what might be if we can build on it and continue on the trajectory that we've seen now for a good four or five months."

But in terms of repairing the country's torn social fabric, the task has hardly even begun, he said.

"People say, have there been stitches put back in that fabric? I'd say we're just trying to line the fabric up and to just get the situation calm enough so that the seamstress can put a couple of stitches into it," he said.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT RON PORTILLO

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor SGT Ron Portillo for his leadership and dedication to the Henderson community and for his service with the Nevada Army National Guard.

SGT Ron Portillo joined the United States Marines immediately after high school where he volunteered for an extremely demanding reconnaissance unit. He completed 3 years with the Marines. After a short break from the Marines, Ron joined the United States Army, where he was selected for the Special Forces and served in the Persian Gulf War, working with small teams on high-risk missions.

Following the Gulf War, Ron moved his wife and six children from Fort Bragg, NC to Henderson, NV where he became a successful small business owner. After a few years, his oldest son decided to join the military, and after talking to recruiters, Ron himself decided to re-enlist. Three months later, he was sent to Iraq as an active duty Special Forces soldier. After a month into his deployment, Ron was reassigned to a Special Forces team in Fallujah. In March 2007, Ron suffered serious injuries when his vehicle struck an IED while en route to provide support to Marines that were pinned down in a firefight.

While recovering at a hospital in Germany, Ron befriended a therapy dog, who visited him daily and assisted him with the healing process. Ron was then transferred to the Brookes Army Medical Center in San Antonio, TX, and was subsequently released in June 2007. Following his release Ron spent countless hours trying to find ways to partner therapy dogs with wounded warriors. Ron has since dedi-

cated his efforts to developing a Web site dedicated to providing information on service-dog programs for those wounded in combat.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor the service and dedication of SGT Ron Portillo for his service in the Armed Forces, and his leadership throughout the Henderson community. He is a remarkable individual, and I applaud his efforts for serving our Nation and fellow comrades throughout the Armed Forces.

THE "TORTURE MEMO" AND THE LAW

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, this week the press reported the declassification and public release of a Justice Department memo popularly known as the "torture memo."

It's news that the memo has been made public, but, sadly, what it says comes as no surprise. At least since the summer of 2004, when it was reported in the press, the American people have known that after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington the Bush Justice Department advised other agencies that the President, when acting as commander-in-chief, is not bound to follow duly enacted Federal laws.

After this was revealed, the Bush administration—preparing for the 2004 Presidential election—repudiated the memo. But it had guided the administration for 22 months, and experts have claimed that its startling reading of the law and the constitution led to excesses at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere.

In 2005, Congress responded by enactment of the Detainee Treatment Act, which requires the defense department to follow the interrogation guidelines in the Army Field Manual and which prohibits the "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment of persons under the detention, custody, or control of the United States Government."

I strongly supported those provisions, which are often referred to as the "McCain amendment" in recognition of their Senate author.

But when President Bush signed them into law, he issued a "signing statement" that raises serious questions about whether he intends to follow the law by suggesting that he intended to reserve the right to authorize prohibited interrogation methods in some cases.

Taken together, the memo and the signing statement clearly signal the Bush administration's contempt for the rule of law. As the Rocky Mountain News says in an April 3 editorial, "This was one step on the path to the Bush administration's unfortunate assertion, until the courts knocked it down, that the president had the power to snatch an American citizen on U.S. soil and hold him incarcerated in solitary confinement indefinitely, without charge, trial or counsel."

And the memo and the signing statement also show that the administration refuses to recognize that its contempt for the law will result in placing every American, especially those in uniform around the world, at grave risk.

I think we all should remember that, in the words of the Colorado Springs Gazette, "In