

TYRANTS AND DESPOTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 48 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, yesterday a good friend of mine, Senator JOHN MCCAIN, became the first U.S. Senator to publicly call for U.S.-led air strikes to halt the violence in Syria.

Respectfully, I disagree with the Senator from Arizona. Our main goal in the Middle East is to protect our interests and the interests of our major ally, Israel.

If we are to be dragged into a civil war in Syria for humanitarian reasons, I would respectfully remind Senator MCCAIN and the President that they do not have the power to unilaterally start a war. The authority to initiate war is vested by the Constitution exclusively in Congress. The War Powers Act was enacted into law over a Presidential veto—not an easy thing to accomplish—to fulfill the intent of the Framers of the Constitution of the United States in requiring that the President has to seek the consent of Congress before the introduction of the United States Armed Forces into hostile action.

Section 2(c) of the War Powers Act provides that no attempt by the President to introduce the United States Armed Forces into hostile action may be made under the War Powers Act unless, number one, there is a declaration of war; number two, a specific authorization; or, number three, a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its Armed Forces.

□ 1330

The Constitution and the War Powers Act are not a list of suggestions; they are the law of the land, the law the President of the United States and every Member of Congress swears to protect and defend. Contrary to Defense Secretary Panetta's assertion before the Senate Armed Services Committee the other day, international permission does not trump congressional permission. If the President is even remotely entertaining the idea of engaging in military action in Syria, he must seek formal authorization from Congress to attack Syria first.

While the violence in Syria is appalling and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is certainly no friend of the United States, before any military action is taken, the President must tell Congress and the American people by what right we attack Syria. Syria has not declared war on the United States nor attacked the United States, our territories, possessions, or Armed Forces. It is not our responsibility to intervene simply because violence erupts in another nation. If it were, then bombs should be falling on a number of countries, including Yemen,

Zimbabwe, Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda, North Korea, Burma, and I could go on and on.

In fact, just this past Tuesday, March 6, the former top United Nations humanitarian official in Sudan warned that the country's military is carrying out crimes against humanity in the country's southern Nuba Mountains in acts that remind him of the 2003-2004 genocide in Darfur. Sudan President Omar al-Bashir is under indictment for war crimes by the International Criminal Court for killings and rapes committed in Darfur. Roughly 5,000 people have died in Syria compared to 400,000 in Darfur. How are the actions of al-Assad any worse than the actions of al-Bashir? Where is the call to bomb Sudan?

Madam Speaker, we could have a war of the week if we went after every tyrant that is committing these kinds of atrocities. Well-respected organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have documented the crimes committed by Burma's military. Many of the abuses committed by the Burmese regime represent some of the world's most horrific ongoing atrocities. For example, the regime has destroyed over 3,300 ethnic minority villages in eastern Burma alone, recruited tens of thousands of children, child soldiers, forced up to 2 million people to flee their homes as refugees and internally displaced, and used rape as a weapon of war against the women of Burma. How is the violence going on in Syria any worse than the destruction and degradation committed by the Burmese junta?

North Korea is widely acknowledged to be the worst violator of human rights in the world. The regime cares so little for its people that authorities are imprisoning, for 6 months in labor training camps, anybody who did not participate in the organized gatherings during the mourning period for the late Kim Jung Il, or who did participate but didn't cry and didn't seem genuine. Six months in a labor camp for not crying? North Korea is a recognized state sponsor of terror, a proliferator of nuclear weapons, and a direct threat to United States forces in South Korea, yet no one is urging the bombing of North Korea.

The world is full of despotic and oppressive regimes. The sad fact is that even in 2012, more of the world labors in the shadow of tyranny than in the daylight of democracy and the rule of law. Many of the world's leaders are at least as bad as Qadhafi and al-Assad, and many are even worse. We are not the world's policeman.

Even if we are willing to ignore the hypocrisy of using military force in Syria for "humanitarian reasons" while we turn a blind eye to the other equally pressing humanitarian crises around the world, there are several practical issues surrounding an operation in Syria that make it ill-advised, and this case should be made to the

Congress if the President or Senator MCCAIN push for military action against Syria.

Libya and Syria are very different countries with different geographies and different militaries. The Libyan army of Qadhafi was far less capable than Syria's army under al-Assad. Its forces were not as well-trained, well-fed or well-armed. In fact, Qadhafi had decisively turned on his military forces after a series of military coup attempts in the 1980s and 1990s. In the place of a professional military, Qadhafi increasingly relied on the revolutionary committees, many of whom defected en masse within days of protests breaking out against his rule.

Even against such a weak opposition, NATO's bombing campaign only succeeded in pushing the loyalist forces back. The rebels were unable to advance very far. As the battle turned in a stalemate, NATO and others were forced to raise their commitment, and the United States spent billions of dollars in that conflict as well, without congressional approval. Trainers were sent in, and NATO personnel shared space in the rebels' operations room in Benghazi. Qatar had to ship in approximately 30 consignment of Milan anti-tank cannons and Belgian FN rifles. During the final assault on Qadhafi's compound, Qatari forces even found themselves leading the charge.

Nearly a year into the civil war to oust President al-Assad, the Syrian army remains largely intact. In addition, Syria has a substantial chemical and biological weapons capability and thousands of surface-to-air missiles and shoulder-launched missiles, making Syria much more of a threat to attacking air forces than anything Libya had. How will the American people react if an American pilot is shot down and captured by the Syrian army, or worse, Syria's terrorist proxy, Hezbollah? And that's why Congress must be consulted before we take any action; and I would urge any of my colleagues who are considering urging the President to take unilateral action, that they remember the War Powers Act and the Constitution.

In addition, if air power is to be used against Assad's regime, as it was to overthrow Qadhafi's, then it is certain that the venture will take longer than the 6 months it took in Libya. The price in Syrian blood on both sides, the rebels and the government, will be higher, and the geography of the country, without the vast stretches of desert between towns that were turned into shooting galleries when Qadhafi tried to remove his forces, would guarantee more civilian casualties from NATO bombs than occurred in Libya. How many civilian casualties are acceptable to prevent a humanitarian crisis?

Other questions that need to be addressed: What will Israel do if Hezbollah responds to Western military actions against Syria by launching rockets into Israel? What will Iran do to protect its ally in Damascus?

Finally, brutally, we must ask the question: Is the devil we know better than the devil we don't know? And here I'd like to divert just a minute from my prepared text.

When we saw the changes in Libya, we didn't know who was going to take over. We didn't know that sharia law was going to be the rule of law there, which took them back into a more radical stance.

In Egypt, the elections that have taken place after Mubarak was removed from power have led to the suspicion, very strong suspicion, that sharia law will be imposed in Egypt as well. We don't know what that will do to the Camp David Peace Accords and whether or not that could cause our ally, Israel, to be in more danger. We need to know, before we get into a war to change regimes, what we're getting in place of the people we are removing.

Qadhafi, as bad as he was, and I didn't like him at all and I think he should have been removed, was no threat to the United States or our allies. He was a threat to his own people. And yet we decided unilaterally to go in and get him, and we did, along with the French and our NATO allies. And now some of my colleagues are talking about going into Syria and removing al-Assad without congressional approval, unilaterally by the President, and we don't know what we'll be getting.

We have found recently from reports that al Qaeda forces are in Syria assisting the rebels. Now we have to make sure that if al-Assad goes, that we don't have a base of operations for the enemies of freedom in Syria. We know what we've got. We don't like it, but we better be careful before we start making a regime change there that al Qaeda doesn't take over or have a big influence in Syria that will cause problems for the United States, our ally Israel, and others in the Middle East later on.

While Senator McCAIN, my good friend, may angrily deny it, the assessment of the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, and half a dozen intelligence reports and independent news agencies is that al Qaeda has inserted themselves inside armed operations groups in Syria, as I just said. Al Qaeda is there. They're the mortal enemy of everything that we believe in, and they're involved with the rebels, and we need to be sure that we're doing the right thing if we participate and if the Congress approves of some action in Syria.

Do we really want to undertake a "significant military commitment"—those are the words of Marine General James Mattis, head of the U.S. Central Command—to create so-called safe havens in Syria to deliver weapons and supplies to al Qaeda fighters from Iraq?

□ 1340

I believe that the sun is slowly setting on the Assad regime in Syria. I sincerely hope that we are not pushed

into a war we do not fully understand and that we don't really need to be in.

I must remind my colleagues in both the House and the Senate one more time: Neither the President nor a few Senators nor Members of Congress have the right to demand or push for unilateral action by the United States without the Congress of the United States being involved in the decision-making process. That has happened in other countries in the past. It happened in Libya. But it should not happen anymore because the Constitution, the War Powers Act, and the rule of law must be maintained by the Congress of the United States.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

HOW TO GROW THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL) for 30 minutes.

Mr. WOODALL. Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the time and your staying with me late on a Thursday afternoon to do this. Is it Thursday afternoon, Madam Speaker, or Friday afternoon? It's Thursday afternoon. I'm losing track of my days because I'm on the Budget Committee, Madam Speaker, I'm on the Budget Committee, and this is budget season, and we are going nonstop meeting after meeting after meeting after meeting to try to find that budget that not only guarantees that our safety net programs like Medicare and Social Security will be there for generations to come, but that also guarantees that America will be here for generations to come. Because if you've looked at the deficits that we're running, if you've looked at the economic circumstances that we're in, if you've looked at the \$15 trillion—now \$16 trillion—that we've passed on to our children and our grandchildren, you know that our economic future is at risk.

We talk so much, Madam Speaker, about the things that divide us in Washington. I sometimes think that's unfortunate. There's really a lot that unites us. And I brought with me today some quotes from President Obama in the State of the Union speeches that he's given right here between where you and I stand today, Madam Speaker, when he has come to the Joint Session of Congress to deliver.

This is what he said in 2010. The President said:

We should start where most new jobs do, in small businesses, companies that begin when an entrepreneur takes a chance on a dream or a worker decides it's time that she became her own boss. Through sheer grit and determination, these companies have weathered the recession and they are ready to grow.

Wow. Who is that talking, Madam Speaker? Is that a Republican? Is that a Democrat? That's an American.

That's an American talking about the American Dream of being your own boss and growing a business, employing your neighbors and growing the American economy. The President understood that when he gave his State of the Union speech in 2010.

In 2011, Madam Speaker, the President returned right here to this very same room, and he said this:

At stake right now is not who wins the next election. At stake is whether new jobs and industries take root in this country or somewhere else.

He was exactly right. He's exactly right about the grit that it takes for entrepreneurs to grow jobs in this country, and he is right that the question is not who wins the next election; the question is how do we ensure that new jobs and new industries take place in America instead of somewhere else around the globe.

Again, in 2011, Madam Speaker, the President said this in the State of the Union speech:

We measure progress by the success of our people, by the jobs they can find and the quality of life those jobs offer; by the prospects of a small business owner who dreams of turning a good idea into a thriving enterprise, and by the opportunities for a better life that we pass on to our children.

Madam Speaker, we see so much in the newspaper about what divides us in this country. These are words that unite us, words that Republicans, Democrats—Americans from north and south, east and west—can all get behind. They don't stop in 2011.

Here he is in 2012, just 2 months ago, Madam Speaker, right here in this Chamber:

To reduce barriers to growth and investment, I've ordered a review of government regulations. When we find rules that are unnecessary, that put an unnecessary burden on business, we will fix them.

He said that two months ago, right here in this Chamber.

Madam Speaker, you know, as I know, that business in this country is under assault. And when business in this country is under assault, American families in this country are under assault, entrepreneurship in this country is under assault, the very basis of the American Dream, of being able to put in a hard day's work for a hard day's wage, to be able to change your station in life by the power of your ideas and the sweat of your brow, is at risk. And why?

I have here, Madam Speaker, a chart that shows the regulatory burden in this Nation. What it actually charts is those regulations that come out of Washington, D.C., where implementation costs alone are \$100 million a year—the implementation costs alone. Not what it burdens businesses with in terms of lost revenues, not the number of jobs that it kills, not how many jobs it pushes overseas to China, to India and elsewhere instead of keeping those jobs in America, but just what it costs out of someone's wallet to actually implement that regulation, and this is what we see.