

Do not take my word for it. Listen to what the Obama administration had to say. In February of this year, President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers stated that "an increase in U.S. exports of natural gas . . . would have a number of mostly beneficial effects on . . . employment, U.S. geopolitical security, and the environment."

The President's economic advisers said that LNG exports would create tens of thousands of jobs in the United States, jobs that "would arise . . . in natural gas production[,] manufacturing [and] a range of sectors, including . . . infrastructure investment, and transportation."

The President's economic advisers also stated that U.S. LNG exports would have "a positive geopolitical impact for the United States." Specifically, they explained that U.S. LNG "builds liquidity in the global natural gas market, and reduces European dependence on the current primary suppliers, Russia and Iran."

Again, these are not my words. This is from the White House.

Mr. President, Congress has a choice: We can watch Putin use natural gas as a weapon against our allies and partners or we can take a meaningful step to help our friends.

My amendment boosts the security of our NATO allies and friends around the world, and it does so through a peaceful means. It doesn't spend American tax dollars and all the while will help to grow America's economy. It is a commonsense amendment, and I ask all of the Members to support it.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

SRI LANKA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about recent developments in Sri Lanka where the new government of President Maithrapala Sirisena has taken several important and encouraging steps to promote good governance, human rights, and reconciliation since his election on January 8.

Among the government's initial accomplishments are the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which curtails the extensive powers enjoyed by the executive and vests more power in the Parliament, limits the Presidential term to 5 years instead of 6, allows the President to hold office only for two terms instead of an unlimited number of terms, and provides for a Constitutional Council to make ap-

pointments to independent commissions on the judiciary, police, public service, elections, and audit, instead of the President as was previously the case. In addition, the right to information has been included as a fundamental right in the Constitution.

Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera has wisely called the attention of the Parliament to the need to review the individuals and entities that were listed under a U.N. regulation pursuant to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373, adopted shortly after the 9/11 attacks. The regulation was used to ban several Tamil diaspora groups for their alleged links to the LTTE. However, the new government reportedly believes that some individuals and organizations may have been wrongly accused of terrorist links when they were merely advocating in support of their rights. The government intends to review the list in the interest of reconciliation and reaffirming its commitment to freedom of expression.

I am also encouraged that the government has revived its relationship with the United Nations, including with the U.N. Human Rights Council, and has invited the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Sri Lanka. I hope such a visit takes place soon.

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence visited Sri Lanka in March-April 2015, and I understand that the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances will visit Sri Lanka in August.

For years, impunity for serious crimes has been the norm in Sri Lanka. The government is working to establish what it describes as a "domestic mechanism" to deal with accountability for human rights violations. A purely domestic mechanism, however, is not likely to be sufficient. The Sri Lankan people, the United States and other governments, the United Nations, and international human rights groups have long called for justice for the victims of atrocities committed by the armed forces and the LTTE during the 30-year conflict. It is essential that the justice process is not only about truth telling, but is a credible, independent mechanism with authority to investigate, prosecute, and appropriately punish those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity, on both sides.

It is also important to the development of a credible accountability mechanism and to the success of this endeavor that Sri Lankan officials consult with local civil society organizations, including the families of the war's victims. They should also invite international bodies, such as the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, to take part in this process, to provide technical assistance as well as substantive input and help with prosecutorial work, evidence-

gathering, and judicial decision-making. A hybrid mechanism, with international experts involved at the prosecutorial and judicial level, will help ensure that the failings and cynicism associated with past domestic accountability mechanisms are not repeated.

I am told that the government intends to work with humanitarian organizations on the issue of missing persons, including forensics, and to resolve the cases of remaining detainees. The United States and other international groups could assist this important humanitarian effort.

Under the government of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Armed Forces day was "Victory Day", a divisive, provocative celebration for the Sinhalese majority. President Sirisena, in his Armed Forces Day speech on May 19, said the policy of the new government will be "development and reconciliation", making clear the government's recognition that development projects alone will not heal the wounds and scars of the past. He also affirmed that the reconciliation process must involve truth seeking, justice, eliminating fear and suspicion among all communities and building trust among them, as well as the rebuilding of infrastructure. He expressed confidence that the Armed Forces would now dedicate themselves to the government's policy on reconciliation.

The return of land in the north and east currently occupied by the Armed Forces, and the resettlement of Tamils displaced by the war and the provision of basic services, is an urgent necessity. Some land in the east that had been allocated by the previous government for infrastructure projects has been released by President Sirisena for the resettlement of the displaced, and a small amount of land in the north has been provided to civilians who were uprooted by the war. But this is only a beginning. Sri Lanka is at peace, so it is time for the Armed Forces to return land, support the resettlement of families, and focus on external threats rather than domestic policing.

Unlike the previous government which vilified its critics and locked up after sham trials journalists who exposed corruption, President Sirisena has taken steps to reaffirm freedom of the press by unblocking media websites, inviting exiled journalists to return to the country, and ensuring freedom of expression for the media to operate without fear of reprisal.

Under the previous government, Sri Lanka's judicial system was politicized, manipulated, and corrupted. The new government is taking steps to reestablish the independence of the judiciary, which is fundamental to any democracy. Also significant was the appointment of the Chief Justice who is from the minority Tamil community immediately after the election of the new government.

The government has committed to fight corruption and ensure accountability for financial crimes even for the

most influential and powerful individuals, to end impunity at any level. It has established a Stolen Assets Recovery Task Force for this purpose. The United States is prepared to assist these efforts and those of civil society to combat corruption.

These are very encouraging steps for which we should commend President Sirisena. They should have been carried out by the previous government, but instead former President Rajapaksa and his brothers Basil and Gotabhaya, and their close associates, sought to dismantle the institutions of democracy, subvert the rule of law, and enrich themselves. Rather than support reconciliation, they encouraged corruption and exacerbated ethnic, religious, and political divisions.

Of course, these are only first steps, and there have been others that raise questions about the government's intentions. For example, MG Jagath Dias, who was appointed the new Army Chief of Staff, commanded a regiment that took part in the final battles of the war that were marked by widespread abuses including summary executions of prisoners and in which countless civilians died, reportedly from government artillery shelling. If the Sri Lankan government is serious about addressing the crimes of the past it will need to take up allegations against senior officers like General Dias. Failing to address the role of senior military commanders, in particular those who still serve, would seriously weaken the government's credibility.

Most immediately, the government's challenge is to hold parliamentary elections as soon as possible. Once a new Parliament is in place the processes of reconciliation, reconstruction, reform, and accountability can proceed apace.

After the elections, President Sirisena's government will need to work closely with the United Nations on plans to address the legacy of past abuses. The U.N. Human Rights Council is expected to take up this issue in its September session in Geneva. Thus, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights needs to release its report before then, as called for by the U.N. Human Rights Council, with recommendations for Sri Lanka and the international community on how best to achieve accountability in Sri Lanka. The government should wait until the U.N. report is issued before finalizing its own plans.

Secretary of State Kerry's visit to Sri Lanka just 4 months after President Sirisena's election was not only symbolic of the revival of relations between our countries, but also illustrative of the Sri Lankan Government's efforts to realign its foreign relations more broadly. Over the last 6 years, the Obama administration has demonstrated leadership within the international community in addressing a range of issues in Sri Lanka. The administration's policy should follow the same trajectory and continue to play a leadership role.

Likewise, the U.S. Congress has long sought to support democracy, development, human rights, and the rule of law in Sri Lanka. A close friend of mine, the late James W. Spain, one of our most able diplomats, served as our Ambassador in Colombo from 1985 to 1988. He was a devoted friend of Sri Lanka. I look forward to doing what I can to assist the Secretary and the Sirisena government, on behalf of all the people of Sri Lanka, in the months ahead.

IRAQ WAR'S IMPACT ON CURRENT NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we have the benefit of looking through the lens of history to learn from past mistakes in the hopes of making more informed decisions for the future. No example is more relevant today than the unintended effects of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and their bearing on the threats of today. I opposed that war from the beginning, and we have paid, and continue to pay, a tremendous price—in American lives, in the unfathomable expense of taxpayer dollars, and in the escalation of strife in that region, and beyond.

There is no doubt that the terrorists of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL, have emerged from Al Qaeda in Iraq, seizing upon instability, weak institutions, ethnic factions, and general hostility toward Western forces that resulted from the post-9/11 Iraq invasion. Our personnel, allies, and interests abroad face significant threats from this terrorist group, which have arisen out of the ill-conceived invasion of Iraq.

We can be proud of the bravery, dedication, and sacrifice of our soldiers and their families. They are not at fault for the complex situation in which we now find ourselves. They served our Nation dutifully, and for that we are grateful. Rather, it serves as a reminder that policymakers cannot act recklessly—especially when taking military action. As we continue to address the very real threat that is ISIL, it is astounding to me how far in the past the hard lessons we learned now appear to be to some commentators and policymakers.

I ask unanimous consent that a perceptive and well-written analysis on this subject, written by the distinguished journalist and former foreign correspondent Barrie Dunsmore, that was published in the Rutland Herald and the Montpelier (Barre) Times Argus on May 24, 2015, be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Rutland Herald and the Montpelier (Barre) Times Argus; May 24, 2015]

SHORT MEMORIES

(By Barrie Dunsmore)

"I am running because I think the world is falling apart," Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said this past week. Senator

Graham is not alone among the many aspiring Republican presidential candidates. Not only do they want us to believe the world is falling apart. They also want us to believe it's not their fault.

As Robert Costa wrote in the Washington Post, "One by one, nearly a dozen GOP hopefuls took the stage (in Des Moines Iowa) for a Lincoln dinner, each different in style and stature but all joining a rising Republican chorus that lays blame for the Islamic State terrorist group squarely at the feet of President Barack Obama." Senator Lindsey Graham said to cheers, "If you fought in Iraq, it worked. It's not your fault it's going to hell. It's Obama's fault."

The Islamic State is but one of the Middle East's problems of recent years. The hopes for a more democratic region engendered by the Arab Spring, have been dashed. Egypt is now more of a military dictatorship than it was under President Hosni Mubarak. Without dictator Muammar Gaddafi, Libya is now awash with weapons, without a functioning government and ruled by tribes. Syria is still in the throes of a three year unresolved civil war, with an estimated 150,000, dead. As Iran and Saudi Arabia violently vie for dominance in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, indisputably the Middle East is more unstable than it was seven years ago.

Yet just as the world economy was in a deep depression after the market crash of '08, when Obama took office so too was the Middle East in turmoil—mostly because of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq.

As they seek to shift the blame of Iraq, which just last year conservative pundit George Will wrote was "the worst foreign policy decision in U.S. history," Republicans are asking us to forget the past. I don't doubt that some already have. In the era of Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, seven years may seem like an eternity. But not everyone will forget.

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush found this out on a recent campaign stop, when Ivy Ziedrich, a Nevada college student confronted him with the charge, "Your brother created ISIS." Bush's response was, "ISIS didn't exist when my brother was president."

It is accurate that the name Islamic State was not in use during the George W. Bush presidency. But the movement that later became ISIS was a direct result of the American invasion. That group called itself "al Qaida in Iraq." It was led by the fanatic Abu Musab al-Zarkawi, and was responsible for hundreds of bombings, kidnappings and beheadings—yes beheadings—in a reign of terror which made Zarqawi the most wanted man in Iraq. His goal was to rid Iraq of foreign forces, and to provoke sectarian conflict between Iraq's Shiite majority and his own Sunni Muslim sect.

Zarqawi was killed in an American bombing raid in 2006. But nine years ago, the Washington Post reported, "Analysts warned that his death may not stem the tide of the insurgency and violence. . . . Zarqawi set up numerous semi-autonomous terrorist cells across Iraq, many of which could continue after his death."

Indeed they did. And joined by numerous bitter Sunni officers from Saddam Hussein's army, al-Qaida in Iraq eventually morphed into the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS.) Its current leader is an Iraqi named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who claims to be the caliph (supreme leader) of the new Islamic State.

But ISIS is by no means the only bi-product of the American invasion of Iraq. When Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his Sunni dominated regime were overthrown by American military might, there were no happier people than the Shiite mullahs of Iran. Saddam had initiated the bloody eight