

NECESSARY REFORMS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is time for America to wake up. The United Nations is a mess, riddled with scandals. In fact, the U.N. itself is a scandal. The Oil-for-Food scheme and the sex trafficking by U.N. officials in Bosnia and the Congo are only two in a long list of egregious acts.

The Oil-for-Food program began as a humanitarian plan to soften the sanctions against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The U.N. would allow Iraq to sell a predetermined amount of oil each year, provided that the Iraqi government used the profits to buy food, medicine and other necessities for its citizens. Instead, Saddam and his cronies twisted this program. These villains got rich while the people of Iraq suffered. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's own son benefited from the Oil-for-Food program.

Only after extreme international pressure did Secretary Annan appoint former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker to investigate the scandal ridden program. Volcker's report found grave conflicts of interest in the program.

The real question is, should the U.N. be above the law? It is blatantly obvious that the U.N. considers itself above the law of nations and answers to absolutely no one. Secretary Annan has said that he will waive diplomatic immunity for any U.N. official who has done wrong. However, his promise carries little meaning, because which government would prosecute the guilty U.N. officials? The officials are not U.S. citizens, their offenses did not take place on U.S. soil and none of the documents in question were required to follow U.S. law. There is no vote for U.N. leaders and no international referendum on its policies. The U.N. sets its own shabby standards for conduct.

These are some of the very reasons why so many of our constituents oppose U.S. membership in the U.N., and it is why many fear U.N. efforts to have the power to tax, field an army or create a court system. Possessing these powers would transform the U.N. into a global governing body. America must draw a line.

The United States provides large sums of money to the U.N. so that "business as usual" can continue. America must no longer blindly follow every policy, scheme, international conference and peacekeeping mission that the U.N. peddles.

The United Nations' greatest fear is that average Americans will no longer tolerate these international scandals and demand that America withdraw from the international organization. If this ever occurred, the U.N.'s thin veil of relevance would be completely ripped away.

Let us face it, the U.N. has failed. It has failed in its mission to promote world peace. While the U.N. claims to provide a forum where nations can air their differences and avoid the battlefield, more dictators have terrorized nations and more generations have been lost to genocide. Instead of removing threats to peace, the U.N. has encouraged, actually even nurtured, regimes that wage violence on their neighbors and oppress and torture their own people.

Instead of a peaceful, prosperous, stable trading partner, the U.N. condones brutal, murdering dictatorships that starve and torture their own people, while once-great powers tremble and use diplomatic double-talk to ignore their responsibilities. Most of these international thugs have two things in common: Each has a voice and a vote in the United Nations.

The United Nations has come under the control of outlaw nations and self-serving special interest groups. Each promotes an agenda to line their pockets with the world's wealth as they diminish the power of the United States and enslave the citizens of their Third World countries. How else could terrorist states like Libya and Syria have served on the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission, while Israel is condemned time after time? Why else would the U.N. refuse membership to a prosperous Nation like Taiwan, and give vicious brutes like Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe a prominent voice at U.N. conferences?

The U.N. scandals are not isolated incidents. The scandals are ingrained in the very structure of the United Nations. The idea that a U.N. Secretary General can act as a global representative or that the U.N. staff can function as an honest and effective international servant is preposterous.

While the time has come for America to wake up, it is also time for Congress to act. That is why just today we approved the United Nations Reform Act of 2005. Now it is up to the U.S. Senate to follow our lead and demand reforms.

I applaud the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE) for his hard work to finally bring accountability and integrity to the U.N. However, reform in the United Nations has been long overdue and action must come soon.

Secretary Annan's task is clear: Bring in the era of integrity and accountability you were charged with, or you will lose the United Nations' single largest contributor, the United States.

REEXAMINING THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, a large majority of Members of the United States House of Representatives voted on October 14, 2002, to allow the President to wage war, probably an extra-constitutional delegation of authority.

There was no direct declaration of war, yet it was authorized under the War Powers Act by this body, so a great deal of the responsibility lies here.

The rationale at the time that was frequently mentioned in the weeks leading up to the vote was the potential for mushroom clouds, as mentioned by Ms. Rice, Mr. CHENEY, President Bush and others very prominently just before the vote in the House, just before an election, when Members felt great pressure. There was a lot of talk about the delivery system of Saddam Hussein for his widely believed-to-be-extensive arsenal of chemical and biological weapons and links to al Qaeda.

Now, I attended the briefings, saw the thin gruel that was presented to Members, and I certainly was not convinced, but I am sure many others were, particularly with a picture of a UAV, which looked like something that could not fly. It had aluminum patches riveted on it and it clearly could not carry anything. It seemed the Air Force guy giving the briefing did not think much of it either. Be that as it may, a large majority of this House bought into that rationale and authorized the President to go to war.

Subsequent to that, revelations about "yellow cake" and Niger and uranium and the potential for nuclear threat was totally dispelled shortly, well, actually internally in the administration before the President used it in the State of the Union, but publicly after that.

So much had been dispelled that on February 5, 2003, I introduced a resolution suggesting that Members of Congress had been misled, had not had good information, and should reconsider this extraordinary delegation of war-making authority to the President.

□ 1545

The Congress failed to act, and we know what proceeded from then.

But now, I would believe that a majority of the Members, not just those of us who opposed the war or some who now feel that they should not have supported the war, but a large majority, would want to have a full investigation of how this happened. How did this all happen? Was it the result of a massive failure of intelligence? If so, then why did the President pin the highest civilian honor, the Medal of Honor, on George Tenet, the head of the CIA who is now an expensive consultant and living in luxury. If he was responsible, then maybe he should suffer some consequences.

Well, that did not happen, but they want to blame the intelligence agencies. Now, is it all the intelligence agencies? Is it one intelligence agency? Is it because of total misinterpretation and incompetence by the administration, or was it selective use, cherry-picking of intelligence, or was it something even worse, deliberate manipulation? We do not know. We simply do not know.