

I say to my friend through the Chair, I think her comments and her question are right on the point.

I yield for another question.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I wish to thank my colleague for correcting me on the point that I missed that, yes, out of the five or six missions I named, I left out the very important one that he corrected me on, which is that there was a link between Saddam and al-Qaida and, in fact, there was al-Qaida all over Iraq.

The Senator and I sit on the Foreign Relations Committee. I think he remembers this document that I put into the RECORD, because I remember he very much wanted it, which showed that about a month after September 11 when we were so viciously attacked by bin Laden—who, by the way, we were going to get dead or alive, and we need to do that—the fact is, the State Department in its own document said there wasn't one al-Qaida cell, not one, in Iraq. There were more cells in America than in Iraq, according to our own State Department. We have put that in the RECORD.

Now, of course, it is a haven for terrorism because of this failed policy, this disastrous policy, this policy that is utter chaos with no end in sight, unless the Senate and the administration look at what my friend put forward, which is finally saying to the President: You need a mission, a mission that can be accomplished, and we need to end this in an orderly fashion.

I wanted to ask my friend one more point, and then I will leave the Chamber. That is about the National Guard. Right now, there are fires raging in my home State, sadly. We have them every year at this time. It is heartwrenching. We need all the help we can get. We always get all the help we ask for. We have never had a problem. The National Guard is called out when it gets really out of control.

Is my friend aware that the best equipment that the National Guard had at its disposal is in Iraq, not here at home? And when the people were crying out for help, not only were so many of the National Guard over in Iraq, my understanding is—and my friend can correct me—approximately 40 percent of our troops over there are National Guard. That is my information. Not only that, the best equipment of the National Guard is over in Iraq.

Don't our people deserve better than that so when they experience disasters, our National Guard can respond?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from California. The Senator has very nicely returned to the main point of what I was trying to illustrate today. We certainly agree on the problems of how we got into this war and our very troubled feelings about that and also the myriad of problems with the way the war is being conducted. But what the Senator from California has done is returned us to the main point I wanted to make today: This strategy is weakening

America. I am not talking about some general sense. We are talking specifically about our military. We are talking specifically about our Army. We are talking specifically about our National Guard.

Yes, we know about this in Wisconsin. We have some 10,000 Guard and Reserve. The vast majority of them have been called up for action overseas. There are serious concerns that have been reported—which, by the way, were beginning prior to 9/11—about equipment. It is to the point where my National Guard people ask me to ask the Secretary of Defense, Are we going to replenish these things for our National Guard? What is the guarantee? I received a rather weak answer, as I recall. The equipment needs are only at 34 percent for the National Guard—a dramatic decline in the last 4 years. Since 9/11, we have allowed the situation to become much worse in terms of equipment for our National Guard, whether it be for use in a foreign conflict or whether it be used to handle a terrorist situation domestically or whether it be used to help deal with one of the natural disasters that obviously can and do occur.

I appreciate the Senator heightening this point. This isn't about opposing a war. This is about mistakes being made by an administration in terms of forgetting the main point of fighting terrorism and forgetting about the need for our military to be strong both internationally and to be able to help, as the National Guard must, domestically.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to speak as in morning business. Is that proper at this time?

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

#### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I am disturbed that we are delayed in taking up the Defense appropriations bill for 2006. It has been a problem. We have to wait for the authorization bill to come before the Senate. I have asked the leader for permission to take up this bill, along with my colleague from Hawaii, and bring the Defense appropriations bill for 2006 before the Senate today. I understand that has been objected to on some procedural ground.

It is my intention to make the statement I would make if the bill were before us. I will later ask that it be printed in the RECORD when the bill is laid before us.

I think the Senate should be using this time. We had intended to have votes today and tomorrow. We will not have votes Monday and Tuesday, but the bill will be before the Senate Monday and Tuesday.

We tried our best to work with the Armed Services Committee on their authorization bill, and we have a dispute between our subcommittee and the Intelligence Committee. That dispute pertains to a matter that should not be discussed on the floor. It is one we thought we had worked out by virtue of a compromise provision we put into this Defense appropriations bill, and I hope the members of the Intelligence Committee will recognize that as such.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak up to 10 minutes as if in morning business.

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

#### AVIAN FLU PANDEMIC

Mr. HARKIN. I thank the Presiding Officer.

Mr. President, I come to the floor at this time to discuss a matter of grave national security. If recent Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita have taught us anything, it is that we have to do a dramatically better job of preparing for diseases before they strike so we are not left picking up the pieces afterward.

I am very gravely concerned that the United States is totally unprepared for an outbreak—and a subsequent international pandemic—of avian flu. We have had two disasters in the last 4 years—9/11 and Katrina followed by Rita. And the Federal Government was totally unprepared for both, despite clear warnings. Similarly, we have been warned in no uncertain terms about avian flu, but our preparations so far have been grossly inadequate.

I think I got my first briefing on this about a year ago from CDC in Atlanta. I have been following it closely in our Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee.

As it has unfolded over the last several months, it is clear that it is not a question of if avian flu is going to reach us, it is a question of when—not if, just when.

As many of my colleagues know, avian flu—or as it is called in the technical jargon, H5N1—has been known to pass first in bird species. It was passed from bird to bird, chicken to chicken, and that type of thing. It has then gotten into migratory waterfowl, which has spread from countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Hong Kong. And they have now found it as far away as Kazakhstan and as far north as the northern regions of Russia. It is just a matter of time before it gets here.