

There is another way, a better way than intervening in almost every major political, ethnic, religious or military dispute around the world. The middle way between isolation and intervention is to have trade and tourism, cultural and educational exchanges, help out during humanitarian crises, give technical advice by government agencies and try to be friends with all nations but maintain an enlightened neutrality on disputes that really are none of our business.

This new directive is more about money than it is about security. Like any gigantic bureaucracy, the Pentagon and its Defense contractors always want more money. One of the most common ways any government agency uses to get more money is by expanding its mission. You can never satisfy any government's appetite for money or land. They always want more.

President Eisenhower warned us many years ago of what he called the military-industrial complex. I have great respect for anyone who serves in the military. I believe in having a strong national defense. But I do not believe in the U.S. providing international defense, and it is certainly not a traditional conservative position to make those in our military the policemen of the world or take on the defense needs of the whole world.

And it is certainly not conservative, nor is it constitutional, for the U.S. to do nation-building all over the world, whether it is done by the Defense Department or any other department.

□ 2300

A NEW DAY FOR IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, the initial reports of yesterday's Iraqi election all point to it having been a remarkable day for the Iraqi people. Although Iraq's security situation remains precarious and the country's economy and much of the infrastructure have yet to be repaired, the past year has seen important progress in the country's political development.

More than 11 million Iraqis went to the polls to cast their votes for a new parliament and a new future. Iraq Sunnis who boycotted the polling in January, turned out in force to ensure their voices would be heard in the new legislature. For weeks, Sunni imams had been imploring their congregants to vote and their calls were heeded. Election observers estimated that turnout was in excess of 70 percent nationwide and the turnout was matched by preelection polling that showed a high degree of enthusiasm for and optimism about the elections and what they mean for the future of Iraq.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of yesterday's voting was the absence

of violence. Across the country, only 52 attacks were recorded, and there were no mass casualty incidents. This stands in marked contrast to the January election when voters in polling stations were hit by more than 300 insurgent attacks.

Yesterday's relative calm was due to the men and women of our Armed Forces. Our troops and their commanders did a magnificent job over the past months to prepare the country for this crucial election. Even as we celebrate the success of the voting, we cannot overlook the incredible sacrifice of our military men and women. They have performed magnificently, but at an enormous cost.

While the election itself was a remarkable achievement, we, our coalition partners and the international community, must move quickly to ensure that Iraq's fragile, nascent democracy is able to flourish.

Two days ago I was invited to the White House, along with a number of my Democratic colleagues, to meet with the President and senior administration officials on preparations for the elections and next steps in Iraq. I appreciated the President's efforts to reach across the aisle for unity, and we had a far-reaching discussion on how best to move forward in Iraq. I hope that the President's recent willingness to engage with Members of Congress, and especially Democrats, augers more consultations with the Hill on Iraq and the broader array of national security challenges that confront us.

Counting the votes will take days and perhaps weeks, given the sheer number of ballots cast for the more than 300 political parties that registered to compete in the election, as well as the bifurcated nature of allocating seats by province and nationwide.

As we move forward, I see a series of five steps as crucial to Iraq's future.

First, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who has done a remarkable job in Kabul and in Baghdad, must work with the Iraqis to assemble a new government that will include the diverse array of Iraqi voices in order to maximize the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the Iraqi people while minimizing the prospects for the dissolution of Iraq. The apparently strong showing by the secular Iraqi National List, headed by former interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, may be an early indicator that a broad-based government may be possible.

Second, we must work with a new parliament and help them execute the revisions to Iraq's Constitution that were promised in the days leading up to the October referendum. Constitutional changes that strengthen the power of the central government and ensure that the Sunnis are able to share in the nation's oil wealth will do much to allay the concerns of Iraq's Sunnis.

Third, we must ramp up our efforts to train and equip Iraq security forces

so that a significant portion of American forces can be redeployed from Iraq with the remainder of American troops adopting a much lower profile. This will allow us to better safeguard the lives of our troops even as we continue to act as the ultimate guarantor for the new Iraqi state.

Fourth, we must fracture the insurgency in order to weaken it. The Iraqi insurgents are made up of three distinctly different groups. The first group, the foreign jihadis, must be destroyed. The second group, which is made up of the hard-core Baathists, is also likely to fight to the bitter end. The third wing of the insurgency is composed of disaffected Sunnis who are motivated primarily by the loss of their status in Iraqi society.

Yesterday's election and the consolidation of a broad-based government should be instrumental in diminishing the threat from this faction.

Finally, we must redouble our efforts to reconstruct Iraq. While there has been some progress in restoring basic services and providing opportunities for Iraqis, there is much work yet to be done. This is an area where we should make a new effort to reach out to the international community and engage them in Iraq's future.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's voting was a triumph for the Iraqi people, for the cause of democracy in the Arab world, and for our Armed Forces; but now we must act quickly and effectively to solidify these political gains.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 3963. An act to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to extend the authorization of appropriations for Long Island Sound.

H.R. 4508. An act to commend the outstanding efforts in response to Hurricane Katrina by members and employees of the Coast Guard, to provide temporary relief to certain persons affected by such hurricane with respect to certain laws administered by the Coast Guard, and for other purposes.

H.J. Res. 38. Joint resolution recognizing Commodore John Barry as the first flag officer of the United States Navy.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 2520. An act to provide for the collection and maintenance of human cord blood stem cells for the treatment of patients and research, and to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program.

H.R. 3402. An act to authorize appropriations for the Department of Justice for fiscal years 2006 through 2009, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2120. An act to ensure regulatory equity between and among all dairy farmers and handlers for sales of packaged fluid milk in federally regulated milk marketing areas and into certain non-federally regulated milk marketing areas from federally regulated areas, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate concurred on a House Amendment with an amendment to Senate bill:

S. 467. An act to extend the applicability of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002.

IRAQ ELECTIONS

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

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, we have just witnessed one of the freest elections ever held in the Middle East. It is important to recognize that independent multinational election monitors have confirmed that yesterday's Iraqi elections, in which a remarkably large number of Sunnis turned out to vote, met international standards. It is estimated that 10 to 12 million Iraqis renounced fear and defied those who seek to demoralize them and to undermine U.S. and international support for their noble commitment to rebuilding a civil society.

As we seek to encourage our friends in the Middle East on their journey of self-determination, let us take a moment to recall with an appropriate level of humility that our own democratic journey was neither quick nor easy and no less worthwhile for the difficulties endured.

Mr. Speaker, this historic moment inspires me to highlight an outstanding bipartisan initiative here in the House which is making a significant impact to strengthen fledgling democratic institutions throughout the world.

I want to commend Speaker HASTERT for his foresight in launching the House Democracy Assistance Commission on which I serve along with 15 of my colleagues. I wish to thank my colleague, Congressman DAVID DREIER, for his leadership on this initiative and his dedication to see it through to fruition.

I also wish to acknowledge Representative DAVID PRICE and my predecessor, Congressman Doug Bereuter, for their hard work since 2003 to move this initiative and to make it a reality.

Since the establishment of the commission in March 2005, Members and staff have worked diligently to identify countries and legislative bodies in need of technical assistance. The House Democracy Assistance Commission has established an exemplary framework to help elected legislators develop badly needed parliamentary infrastructures to foster just and thriving civil society based upon democratic principles.

In his second inaugural address, President Bush issued a global call to freedom, the heritage of all mankind.

Through the commission, Members of Congress have answered the President's call to move the principles of democracy around the world. And beginning next year, Democratic and Republican Members alike will join together to support and encourage our counterparts in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country; in East Timor, the world's newest country which hungered for independence and now hungers for working democratic institutions; in Georgia, where the 2003 Rose Revolution ushered in peaceful change; in Macedonia, which emerged from the brink of civil war to a new day of freedom; and also in Kenya, a regional African power in the forefront of the war on terror.

Through technical assistance missions, material assistance and exchange programs that bring legislators to the U.S. and allow our Members to share their knowledge and experiences with members of parliaments in partner countries, the House of Representatives is working directly with legislators around the world to provide expertise and parliamentary best practices. This assistance will emphasize committee operations, budgetary issues, defense oversight, specialized legislation and oversight, legislative procedures, research services, information services, as well as constituent services.

The commission also plans to support emerging legislative institutions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Lebanon, countries where governments had imposed unspeakable hardships on their own people previously. It is staggering to realize that just a few short years ago the brutal Taliban regime held all of Afghanistan hostage.

On December 19, thanks in great measure to the perseverance and dedication of our men and women in uniform, Afghans are inaugurating their first parliament in over 30 years.

Khalid Farooqi, a legislator in Afghanistan's Lower House of Parliament, was recently quoted as saying, "We want to build our country, we do not want to destroy it again."

For the first time since Saddam Hussein began his savage reign, and despite factional tensions and the threats of nihilistic insurgents, an astounding 70 percent of Iraqis courageously rose yesterday to determine their own future and held elections for a new National Assembly and government.

We also look to a new dawn of hope in Lebanon, where, tragically, Gibran Tuani, a publisher and deputy at Lebanon's Parliament, was assassinated this Monday in a bombing by those who fear the freedom that comes from self-determination.

Just as our troops and over 22,000 soldiers from 30 coalitions nations stood strong to help make yesterday's victory possible in Iraq, I am proud of my fellow Democrats and Republicans as we stand together to provide hope, encouragement, and vital technical assistance to the work of the House Democracy Assistance Commission.

FEMA TRAILERS, BUT NOBODY'S HOME

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

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed the gulf coast as a category 4 storm. Due to the massive damage caused by one of the most costly natural disasters in our Nation's history, thousands of Louisiana and Mississippi residents whose homes were destroyed were forced to relocate to areas such as my home State of Arkansas. Many are still there today.

As a result of Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, commonly referred to as FEMA, purchased at least 20,000 brand-new manufactured homes; and thousands of these homes, nearly 4 months later, have not reached those who need them, citizens of this country who lost their homes and everything that they owned on August 29, 2005.

Instead, these homes are being stored by FEMA in five different so-called staging areas, including staging areas in my congressional district near my hometown at the Hope Municipal Airport in Hope, Arkansas, at Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant near Texarkana, all of these staging areas some 450 miles from where the eye of the storm hit the gulf coast.

Due to the inability of FEMA to provide displaced families with manufactured homes in a timely manner, staging areas are overflowing. For instance, at Hope Airport, the inactive runways and tarmacs are overloaded with manufactured homes, forcing the excess homes to be placed in the surrounding fields and pastures. These pastures and fields were not effectively prepared by FEMA for staging or storage, if you will. When the winter rains hit the inadequately prepared sites, many of the trailers carrying the manufactured homes will sink. This will result in even more unnecessary delays and additional work for a system that is badly flawed.

I have written a letter to the acting FEMA director, David Paulson, requesting that he immediately review the apparently ineffective process of distributing the FEMA-purchased manufactured homes to the Hurricane Katrina evacuees who so desperately need them.

As I drive throughout Arkansas's Fourth Congressional District, and in my very hometown of Prescott, Arkansas, I see these manufactured homes sitting empty; and I am appalled at the waste of taxpayer money and the lack of a timely response on behalf of FEMA and the Federal Government for those who desperately need housing for their families, with many residents literally still living in tents on the gulf coast nearly 4 months after the detrimental hurricane hit our gulf coast.