

his left arm forced his retirement in November 1981. Tim McCarthy, a Secret Service agent, was shot in the chest and suffered a lacerated liver. He recovered and returned to duty.

Still, four lives were changed forever, and all by a Saturday-night special, a cheaply made .22 caliber pistol, purchased in a Dallas pawnshop by a young man with a history of mental disturbance. This nightmare might never have happened if legislation that is before Congress now, the Brady bill, had been law back in 1981.

President Reagan was right. The record of prevention of gun sales to potentially dangerous buyers over the past 14 years and the lives saved dramatically demonstrate that and remind us of the wisdom embodied in the Brady law.

#### 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WAR IN IRAQ

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, next week marks the 5-year anniversary of the war in Iraq. Although Saddam Hussein's brutal authoritarian regime no longer exists, the war has been nothing less than a disaster for that country, for others in the region, and unquestionably for our own, as well.

Four million Iraqis are displaced from their homes and Iraq's profoundly weak central government cannot provide its citizens with sufficient basic services like food, water, and electricity or protect them from savage violence, disappearances, or kidnappings. Tensions continue to rise throughout the Middle East and, as the war triggers internal unrest in many countries, it has caused our own credibility to decrease significantly.

The war continues to undermine our top national security priority—the fight against al-Qaida, which has strengthened itself in Pakistan and reached out to new affiliates around the world. According to the Congressional Research Service, the war costs us over \$10 billion a month in direct costs. The war saps our military, which is stretched too thin to keep us safe here at home. In short, the war is making us weaker, not stronger, and that trend is not likely to change.

America continues to be mired in a conflict that has no end in sight. As of the beginning of this week a total of 3,974 American soldiers had been killed and 29,320 wounded. While the administration touts a recent decline in violence as an indication that the surge is "working," there is little political progress that might indicate the decrease in violence will result in genuine national reconciliation. As the region remains particularly fragile and our international credibility profoundly damaged, Americans ask each other just how many more billions of dollars will be spent and how many more of our brave troops will die or be injured while we wait for national reconciliation in Iraq—which is the only way to end the violence.

Just 2 weeks ago, many of my Republican colleagues stood on the Senate

floor to sing their praises of the surge, but now we may be witnessing a re-emergence of the brutal violence that was said to have dissipated. Early last week, two car bombs exploded, killing 24 people and wounding 56, while later in the week two bombs exploded in downtown Baghdad, killing nearly 70 people and wounding over 120. Yesterday a suicide bomber approached five American soldiers in Baghdad and detonated a bomb—killing all five soldiers and injuring three more. This attack has been labeled the worst attack on U.S. forces in months and it comes only days after a female suicide bomber blew herself up in the home of a Sunni leader who was reported to have been working in collaboration with U.S. forces.

Similarly, another political impasse in Parliament may result in little tangible results from recently passed and supposedly key legislation. Yes, a de-baathification law has passed but it may usher in renewed sectarian tensions as former officials from Hussein's regime try to reclaim their old jobs. A provincial powers election law was sent back to the Parliament by the President's Council—requiring another round of drafting before it is able to move forward. As we well know, working on a law and even passing it is one thing—seeing it successfully implemented is another.

National reconciliation still looks far off. The passage of what the administration is calling "benchmark" laws does not ensure society-wide sectarian reconciliation; in fact, there are significant concerns about how the local efforts we have supported to bring about this decline in violence will be integrated into the national framework. The Sunni Awakening has taken tens of thousands of former-insurgent Sunni militia fighters and it is unclear to what extent we can rely on their loyalties. It is not hard to see, however, that this policy risks increasing distrust between the local Sunnis and national government, which is led predominantly by Shi'ites.

Without a legitimate political settlement at the national level, any decline in violence in Iraq is likely to be tenuous. Recent news from Iraq seems to indicate that any gains in security are already slipping and without a strategy for safe redeployment, it is inevitably our brave men and women who will pay the price.

The war in Iraq drags on while al-Qaida has reconstituted and strengthened itself. The Director of National Intelligence, DNI, recently testified before Congress that al-Qaida's central leadership based in the border area of Pakistan is its most dangerous component. And just a few months ago, the DNI again repeated the Intelligence Community's assessment that, over the last 2 years, "[al] Qaida's central leadership has been able to regenerate the core operational capabilities needed to conduct attacks in the Homeland."

Let me remind my colleagues, that it was from Afghanistan, not Iraq, that

the 9/11 attacks were planned and it was under the Taliban regime—which is once again gaining ground—that al-Qaida was able to flourish so freely. With a recent report warning that we are not winning in Afghanistan, we need to rethink our current Iraq-based strategy so we can counter the threat posed by al Qaida around the world.

As we approach the 5th anniversary of the US-led invasion in Iraq, it is clear that continuing the current open-ended military policy doesn't make sense. The American people certainly know that this war doesn't make sense and they expect us to do everything in our power to end it. We in Congress cannot in good conscience put Iraq on the backburner, and we cannot turn a blind eye or feign helplessness as the administration keeps pursuing its misguided policies.

This Congress has no greater priority than making right the mistake it made over five years ago when it authorized the war in Iraq. I do not want the American people to lose faith in their elected leaders for pursuing a war that they rightly oppose. I do not want to watch a failed strategy perpetuate regional turmoil any longer and I do not want any more American troops to die or get injured for a war that is not in our national security interest.

#### KC-X TANKER DECISION

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, on February 29, 2008, the Secretary of the Air Force, Michael W. Wynne, announced that the Air Force had made a selection in the KC-X competition for development and procurement of up to 179 tanker aircraft, which are urgently needed to support our armed forces.

This was a critical step forward in the recapitalization of an aging fleet of aircraft that are essential for force projection, intelligence, surveillance, and global strike capabilities. A modern tanker force is at the heart of our national security.

I understand that it was a carefully constructed and transparent process that the Department of Defense and the Department of the Air Force structured and faithfully implemented to reach this decision. As Secretary Wynne said, the announcement "is the culmination of years of tireless work and attention to detail by our acquisition professionals and source selection team, who have been committed to maintaining integrity, providing transparency and promoting a fair competition for this critical aircraft program."

The Boeing Company has filed a protest, as is their right under law, with the Government Accountability Office concerning the Air Force's award of this contract to Northrop Grumman. Further, as provided by law, the GAO will issue their decision within the next 100 days.

I now would like to provide some context and historical background to the ongoing discussion by reviewing the oversight process employed by Senate oversight committees beginning