

HOW THE 20-YEAR WAR STARTED

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

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, how did the 20-year war get started? It had been long assumed that the United States Government, shortly before Iraq invaded Kuwait in August of 1990, gave Saddam Hussein a green light to attack. A State Department cable recently published by WikiLeaks confirmed that U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie did indeed have a conversation with Saddam Hussein one week prior to Iraq's August 1, 1990, invasion of Kuwait. Amazingly, the released cable was entitled, "Saddam's Message of Friendship to President Bush." In it, Ambassador Glaspie affirmed to Saddam that "the President had instructed her to broaden and deepen our relations with Iraq." As Saddam Hussein outlined Iraq's ongoing border dispute with Kuwait, Ambassador Glaspie was quite clear that, "we took no position on these Arab affairs."

There would have been no reason for Saddam Hussein not to take this assurance at face value. The U.S. was quite supportive of his invasion and war of aggression against Iran in the 1980s. With this approval from the U.S. Government, it wasn't surprising that the invasion occurred. The shock and surprise was how quickly the tables were turned and our friend, Saddam Hussein, all of a sudden became Hitler personified.

The document was classified, supposedly to protect national security, yet this information in no way jeopardized our security. Instead, it served to keep the truth from the American people about an event leading up to our initial military involvement in Iraq and the region that continues to today.

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The secrecy of the memo was designed to hide the truth from the American people and keep our government from being embarrassed.

This was the initial event that had led to so much death and destruction—not to mention the financial costs—these past 20 years. Our response and persistent militarism toward Iraq was directly related to 9/11, as our presence on the Arabian Peninsula—and in particular Saudi Arabia—was listed by al Qaeda as a major grievance that outraged the radicals who carried out the heinous attacks against New York and Washington on that fateful day.

Today, the conflict has spread through the Middle East and Central Asia with no end in sight.

The reason this information is so important is that if Congress and the American people had known about this green light incident 20 years ago, they would have been a lot more reluctant to give a green light to our government to pursue the current war—a war that is ongoing and expanding to this very day.

The tough question that remains is was this done deliberately to create the justification to redesign the Middle East, as many neo-conservatives desired, and to secure oil supplies for the West; or was it just a diplomatic blunder followed up by many more strategic military blunders? Regardless, we have blundered into a war that no one seems willing to end.

Julian Assange, the publisher of the WikiLeaks memo, is now considered an enemy of the state. Politicians are calling for drastic punishment and even assassination; and, sadly, the majority of the American people seem to support such moves.

But why should we so fear the truth? Why should our government's lies and mistakes be hidden from the American people in the name of patriotism? Once it becomes acceptable to equate truth with treason, we can no longer call ourselves a free society.

MAKING AMERICA FIRST

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

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the President for his message last night, and I especially would like to focus on one aspect of the message.

The President indicated to us that sitting together was important. It has great symbolism, and it's a positive thing; but he also indicated to us that this is not the final step in the process. Sitting together can never, never replace working together. So it is what we do today—last night he said tomorrow—sitting together tonight, he indicated, but working together tomorrow; this is where we have to focus our energies and efforts. We must work together. And if we're going to work together to fulfill what I believe is a great challenge—and that is America first, to make America number one—if we're going to make America first, America number one, we absolutely have to focus on education.

Education is important because the jobs, as we go forward, will require much more education than we have been allowed to have and have good jobs in the past. We must focus on education to have the good jobs that we want. And jobs are a priority for all of us.

Some statistical information is available to help us better understand why we need to focus on education.

Currently, about 25 percent of our students are completing high school. Over the next 10 years, half of all new jobs will require more than a high school education. If we compare our 15-year-olds to 15-year-olds around the world, we find that we are 20 when it comes to science literacy; China is number 13; Korea 3. The U.S. is number 28 when it comes to mathematics literacy among our 15-year-olds; China is number 1; Korea number 3. The U.S. is

ranked 16 when it comes to reading literacy among 15-year-olds, China is number 1, Korea number 2.

We must focus on and maintain an educated workforce. An educated workforce requires that we understand that we have to have quality teachers and that we are going to have to make sure that these teachers will invest in education themselves because they see it as a means by which they can have a livelihood.

I understand that most teachers don't teach simply because they want money. They teach because they want to be with children, and they want to see children learn. This is important. But teachers have to feed their families, too. I support making sure that teachers get a decent day's pay for a hard day's work. I support teachers and making sure that the teachers are available to educate our children.

If we're going to have America first, we have to have a first-rate health care system. We had a great sickness-care system. We were among the best when it came to sickness care. We spent a hundred billion dollars a year treating persons in emergency rooms, in facilities outside of primary care facilities.

But if we're going to be number one, we had to move away from the \$2.5 trillion that we were spending annually on health care, which translates into \$79,000 a second—17.6 percent of GDP—and by 2018 it would have become \$4.4 trillion per year—more than 20 percent of GDP—\$139,000 a second.

To have America first, we've got to educate our people and we've got to have them receive quality health care. Quality health care can never be underestimated because of the way it impacts the workplace.

America can be first. I stand for America first. I love America. And I stand here today to say to my colleagues across the aisle that I am willing and ready to reach out and work with you to help make America first because if America is first, not only is the United States a better place, but the world would be a better place because of the values that we hold so near and dear to us.

We believe in liberty and justice for all. We believe in government of the people, by the people, for the people. We believe that every person ought to succeed on his merits or fail on his demerits. That's what America gives to the world—the notion that there is a fair system that allows anyone to rise to the top, to reach the zenith of life, the best that life can offer. We take this to the world, and I want America to be first so that the world can benefit from what America has to offer.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your message. And I assure you I have taken the challenge that you have accorded us. I will work with others to make sure that we get beyond the symbolism of sitting together and move to working together which will make the difference in the lives of the people in this country and, indirectly, the people around the world.