our capital, Carson City, to meet with county commissioners. One of the big problems we had with the Carson River, which is a wild river with no dams, was with a levy that had been washed away. This levy had been there for as long as anyone could remember, but no one claimed ownership of it. It did not belong to the county. It did not belong to the State. The farmers did not claim it, and neither did the Indians. It was essential, however, that levy be reconstructed. So the county said, ''We will take responsibility.'' As soon as they did that, FEMA was there to begin work on how to reconstruct the levy, which is so essential to prevent damage from Nevada's spring thaws.

The third disaster assistance category is hazard mitigation assistance, which provides funding for reducing future losses in disaster areas. We have an area along the Truckee River where FEMA is considering buying all of the land. It is likely that this area will suffer another flood, so why should we continue to put those residents in harms way? The homes should not have been built there, and FEMA's efforts to buy this land is a fundamental part of hazard mitigation assistance.

Additionally, one of the first things FEMA does in an afflicted community is activate what they call the National Teleregistration Center. This sounds like a fancy name, but it is basically a telephone bank which begins taking applications for assistance within hours of the President's declaration. In Nevada, we have had over 3,000 people register for assistance by using this telephone number. Moreover, as of just a few days ago, FEMA had issued millions of dollars in housing checks to Nevadans; approved nearly a half a million dollars in individual and family grants in Nevada; obligated almost $5 million in public assistance grants to repair and restore Nevada public facilities; and issued $15,000 in disaster unemployment assistance to Nevada residents left jobless.

One reason FEMA works so well in a partnership with local governments is because, when there is a disaster, they do not come in and say we are going to take care of everything. The reason cooperation is coming from State and local governments is because they are required to come up with 25 percent of the costs of these repairs.

Amidst all the chaos of this devastating flood, FEMA was a source of hope, assistance, and relief. In time of disaster, when communities are reeling from devastation caused by nature or humans, it is vital than an emergency management infrastructure is ready to respond immediately. FEMA works in cooperation with States and nonprofits to pick up where their efforts left off. This efficient Federal Agency also works to cover what residents' insurance does not.

Since the potential for flooding in some areas is still extreme, FEMA's efforts in hazard mitigation planning are invaluable. I have already talked about an example of that. The Carson and Walker Rivers are threatening to flood again, and the problem will not be gone until the snow has melted. The flood of 1997 washed away levees, choked river channels, and saturated soils. These conditions make the area ripe for more flooding. FEMA will be there to help if this untoward situation takes place. Because of strong leadership and a willingness to make necessary reforms, FEMA has become an indispensable Government agency for millions of Americans who have suffered these terrible losses. In a 1994 survey, over 80 percent of natural disaster victims approved of the way FEMA did its work. This is clearly, Mr. President, government working for us. The Director, James Lee Witt, should be very proud of this Agency. I know I am.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). The Chair recognizes the Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. TORRICELLI. I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for 10 minutes.

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

THE WAR AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, before this day is ended, the administration must decide whether or not to certify Mexico as an ally in the war against illegal drugs.

Having served in the House of Representatives as chairman of the Western Hemisphere Committee for some years, and representing the State of New Jersey, which, among other centers of urban and suburban life in our country, has been plagued by narcotics, I feel a need and a responsibility to address the administration on this issue before it makes its final judgment because I believe, based on the actions of the Government of Mexico in the last year, the choice, though difficult, is very clear. The simple fact is that no country anywhere on the globe now poses a more immediate threat to our actions in curtailing the spread of narcotics than Mexico. Indeed, the administrator of the DEA has said, and I quote, ''Mexicans are now the single most powerful drug trafficking operation in the world.''

The State Department's 1996 World Narcotics Control Strategy Report outlines the threat that Mexico now represents. It cites Mexico as the principal transit route for cocaine entering the United States and a major source for heroin and marijuana. Indeed, Mr. President, it has been suggested that with the success of American operations in the Caribbean and the Bahamas, fully two-thirds of cocaine now entering the United States is being routed through Mexico. As we have succeeded in the Caribbean and the Bahamas pound for pound, dollar for dollar, Mexico has been available to compensate the drug cartels. The State Department's 1996 report further concludes, ''Mexico is the most important money laundering center in the Western Hemisphere.''

There is no escaping the fact that Mexican cartels now are bribing whomever can be bribed and killing those who resist. In recent months, eight Mexican prosecutors and law enforcement personnel have been murdered in Tijuana, all this since certifying last year that Mexico was assisting United States Government operations. In the last year, Mexico has failed to capture or extradite a single high-ranking member of any drug cartel. There are now 52 outstanding United States extradition requests for drug dealers, and Mexico has not complied with a single one of those extradition requests. Indeed, Mr. President, there is no record of any Mexican national ever being extradited to the United States on a narcotics charge.

There has been considerable hope since certification last year that the use of the Mexican Armed Forces would represent a change. If, indeed, the narcotics strategy of Mexico included not simply law enforcement personnel who might have been compromised but Mexico represented and recognized that this was a matter of their own national security and involved their armed forces, that there might be a change. But the record is now clear. There has not been a change. The announcement of only last week that General Gutierrez, a 42-year veteran of the armed forces, had accepted bribes from the Carrillo Fuentes cartel makes clear that the entry of the Mexican Armed Forces is not only insufficient but inadequate and, indeed, potentially counterproductive.

Changes in Mexican law lead us to the same conclusion. Last year the Mexican Parliament passed criminal money laundering laws, but they are both incomplete and completely not implemented. These laws at a minimum do not require banks to report large and suspicious currency transactions. Unfortunately, the Mexican Government, having not implemented its antinarcotics strategy, having now recognized that the entry of the armed forces is inadequate or counterproductive and taking no actions against laundering with the banks, it therefore, in my judgment, can be concluded that Mexico has not taken the certification process seriously. Previous certifications have brought no new cooperation, and now we must reach a different judgment.

Indeed, Mr. President, in light of the evidence of the corruption of law enforcement personnel, new evidence of corruption of the armed forces, the failure to comply with American requests for extradition, the failure to enforce their own laws on money laundering, the United States Government should be answering the following question: What else would Mexico have to do to be denied certification? Having

failed on almost any level of analysis, what else could they do? Here is what we see.

The United States today will also readdress the question of whether or not Colombia should be recertified. It is an arguable question. In the last year, since we denied certification, the Colombian military genuinely seems to have at least undergone some change. They have mobilized 5,000 troops and through the use of joint military and law enforcement operations destroyed laboratories producing 1½ tons of cocaine per day. They have issued 3,000 arrest warrants on drug charges and removed 450 million dollars' worth of cocaine from the production pipeline.

The administration may or may not, on their own evidence, recertify Colombia. But the Colombian experience gives evidence that, while it is difficult to take action against a friendly government, people in Colombia or Mexico that we respect, it is successful. Our decertification of Colombia produced results. It is a question the administration must address before deciding on their actions about Mexico today.

The President is faced with three possibilities in deciding whether to certify Mexico in the drug war. He can certify that Mexico is fully cooperating with the United States Government actions. That would be false on its face. There is no evidence to support a conclusion that Mexico is being cooperative. Indeed, it would make the entire certification process lose all credibility. No nation involved in narcotrafficking within its borders would ever feel any responsibility or pressure to cooperate with the U.S. Government activities if we were to so stretch our credibility by fully certifying Mexico.

Second, the administration can decertify Mexico and bring a halt to all American foreign assistance except antidrug programs.

Or, third, the administration can decertify Mexico but grant a national security waiver. The last of these options I would understand. People could legitimately argue the relative merits of decertification with a national security waiver, based on specific promises of the Mexican Government; to deny certification but, for 1 more year, to give one last chance for them to meet the responsibility to their own people, the international community, and their previous promises. But to certify, given that this other option is available, would be inexplicable to our own people, an insult to those engaged in this country in law enforcement, and contrary to the evidence.

On occasion, in this country, we describe our efforts against narcotics as a war on drugs. But in dealing with foreign governments with whom we would like to have good relations, we seek to win a war without casualties. The sensitivities of the Mexican Government might be a casualty in this certification, but it is necessary if we are to be serious and produce real results.

Finally, I hope the administration will reach the right judgment. The stakes are high. I urge the administration to take these comments and these facts into consideration in reaching its judgment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, may I inquire, is the Senate in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business.

PRESIDENTIAL VIOLATION OF FEDERAL CAMPAIGN LAW

Mr. CRAIG. In speaking in morning business this morning, I want to express my concern, actually for the first time, on an issue that has been brewing publicly and not so publicly for well over 2 months now. As the Senate struggles to try to develop a mechanism under which we can effectively investigate the alleged wrongdoing at the White House as it relates to Presidential campaign fundraising, the issue gets larger and larger by the day. Yesterday, I finally believed it was time to speak out in relation to the Justice Department appointing independent counsel. I say so because it is obvious to me now that the public does not want the Congress to grind itself into gridlock and partisan fracturing in an effort to do what it should responsibly do, and that is investigate alleged wrongdoing or violations of law on the part of the executive branch.

Be that as it may, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are also finding themselves in what I believe to now be a most embarrassing situation, having to argue that we probably ought not to do this, or to reduce the scope of what we should legitimately do, all in defense of a President who, by the hour, appears to be increasingly more involved in what is allegedly wrongdoing or violation of Federal campaign law.

So, yesterday, I asked the Attorney General in a press release to appoint independent counsel and to move ahead with what she and the Justice Department must responsibly and rightfully do. The New York Times editorialized, and they said this:

> Janet Reno's insistence that she is waiting for creditable evidence before appointing an independent counsel has now reached a point of mindlessness. By the standards that applied to the Carter, Reagan, and Bush administrations, the threshold for appointing an independent counsel has been reached and passed. If she will but look, Ms. Reno will see a pervasive pattern of reckless behavior and an array of suspicious incidents that cry out for an independent counsel.

That editorial went on to say—it speaks of the White House, and it says:

> Presidents and their White House aides are inevitably involved in campaign planning, as certainly U.S. Senators are in the planning of their campaigns. But, by openly bartering Presidential invitations for political contribution and by relentlessly mixing official and political, this administration has gone so far beyond the normal rules of political behavior and the traditional interpretation of Federal law that even so dogged a Democrat as Pat Moynihan. . . .

And so on and so forth. And it speaks again for Ms. Reno to appoint that independent counsel.

This morning in the Washington Times, again, headlines, ''Reno Not Ready for Outside Probe.''

My question today is to Ms. Reno. When will you be ready? When there is a massive public outcry of wrongdoing or alleged wrongdoing? When the evidence piles so high at the door of the White House that you cannot step across the threshold to go see your friend, the President, Mr. Clinton?

Ms. Reno, wake up. Listen to what is being said in public. It is time to act. It is time we develop an independent counsel, bipartisan, nonpartisan, to investigate what is now verging on a major scandal. Someone asked me while I was traveling in Idaho last week, ''Why is the President out advocating campaign finance reform when it appears that he is the greatest violator?'' I said, ''There is an old adage that those who sin the most are the first to the altar.''

We find it increasingly embarrassing to read in the newspapers everyday that somehow the White House, the very image of this country, was used for personal gain in a way that no other President has used it.

So, once again, today I call on the Attorney General to do what she must responsibly do. The allegations grow by the day. Ms. Reno, do what you should do. Appoint an independent counsel to investigate, in a nonpartisan way, what should be done, for the sake of the Presidency and the White House itself.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Wall Street Journal article entitled ''Irate Clinton Blasts Moves for Counsel'' be printed in today's RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Feb. 18, 1997]

IRATE CLINTON BLASTS MOVES FOR COUNSEL

(By David Rogers)

WASHINGTON.—An angry President Clinton called Democratic senators this week complaining of demands inside the party for a special counsel to investigate foreign influence in fund raising for his presidential campaign.

Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D., S.D.) was awakened around 1 a.m. Monday by Mr. Clinton. Leaders of the Democratic Senatorial Committee were also called Sunday night by the president, who angrily reminded senators he had gone to New York to raise money for their campaigns in the prior week.

None of the senators called by Mr. Clinton would discuss these conversations, and the White House declined to comment. Members of Congress and Democratic aides, however, confirmed the timing and substance of the calls. Mr. Clinton appears to have been provoked by Sunday talk shows in which former New Jersey Sen. Bill Bradley and Sen. Russell Feingold (D., Wis.) endorsed the appointment of an independent counsel.