

IRAQ

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this Tuesday we heard the President of the United States in his State of the Union Address once again appeal to the American people to support sending United States troops into a preemptive war against Iraq. In support of his appeal, he did not tell us anything we have not heard before.

A majority of the American people remain unconvinced that the United States, only 3 months after sponsoring a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Iraq to disarm, should now, without the support of the Security Council, abandon the U.N. inspections process and launch a unilateral military invasion.

On January 18, in my home State of Vermont, over 3,000 Vermonters gathered in front of the Vermont State House in Montpelier, in freezing weather—in fact, some of the coldest weather we have had in years—to express their opposition to a war with Iraq. It is a privilege to represent a State whose citizens have always been among the most thoughtful voices and sometimes the most outspoken voices.

Those Vermonters were of all ages and from all walks of life. They were not alone. Hundreds of thousands of Americans, including many Vermonters, traveled to Washington to brave the subfreezing temperatures here. And there were protests in other cities and towns across the country.

These demonstrations convey the growing recognition of many Americans that the administration is preparing to invade Iraq, despite the opposing views of many allies and irrespective of any decision by the U.N. Security Council.

The situation in Iraq is not a simple black-and-white issue. I have said this over and over. We saw how the Reagan administration and the former Bush administration often facilitated and frequently ignored Saddam Hussein's development of weapons of mass destruction, until he extended his territorial claims to Kuwait's oil fields. We all know there is abundant evidence that Saddam Hussein is a deceitful, murderous villain. No one ignores that.

Still, there are times in history when circumstances compel us to speak out, and this is one of those times.

Several Senators have spoken eloquently—Senator KERRY, Senator BIDEN, Senator KENNEDY, and others—and I associate myself with many of their remarks.

Mr. President, the White House and Pentagon are fueling the belief that war with Iraq is inevitable. That was the President's message in the State of the Union Address, although no new evidence was offered. Many in the White House are eager, even impatient, for war to begin. They view Iraq as the first step in a fundamental reshaping of the geopolitical alignment of the Middle East. It reminds me of when I first started serving in the Senate, and the White House political thinkers at that

time were obsessed with theories about falling dominos.

I, like many here, and like many in the White House who are the most vocal advocates of a preemptive, unilateral invasion of Iraq, have been blessed with never having faced military combat.

I take to heart the wise words of my friend, Senator CHUCK HAGEL:

Many of those who want to rush this country into war and think it would be so quick and easy don't know anything about war. They come at it from an intellectual perspective versus having sat in jungles or foxholes and watched their friends get their heads blown off.

These same administration officials have also studiously avoided talking about what is inevitable in any war—American lives will be lost and the lives of innocent civilians, overwhelmingly, will be lost. People will die on both sides. And they give short shrift to the risks war with Iraq poses to building broad support for peace in the Middle East and, most important, to our efforts to thwart international terrorism.

The saber rattling in Washington—and the steady deployment of tens of thousands of U.S. troops, planes, and ships to the Persian Gulf—is causing alarm and fear both here and abroad. But world opinion, including so many of our allies, is squarely in favor of exhausting every effort to avoid war.

The people of Vermont gave me, as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee in the spring of 1975, the opportunity to cast a tie-breaking vote against continued funding of the Vietnam war. I recall so well how over 30 years ago, even before focus groups, mass polling, and the hyperbole of midterm elections, White House politics—joined unfortunately by both parties—not the need to protect the American people, caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people in that unnecessary war in Vietnam. I am as proud of that vote as any I have cast since—and I have cast well over 10,000 votes in this body—and I will bring Vermonters' voices to the Iraq debate today.

It has been only 60 days since the U.N. weapons inspectors returned to Iraq. They are just reaching full capacity. I and others here urged President Bush to go to the United Nations and seek a resolution calling on Iraq to disarm, and I applauded the President when he did that. It was one of the finest speeches of his career, and he secured a unanimous vote in the Security Council for that resolution.

Now, however, the White House is wrong to dismiss the inspections as having failed so soon when the chief U.N. inspector says he is expanding his team and plans to work at least into March. The British, French, and German governments have all said the U.N. should be given more time, especially as long as the Iraqis give the inspectors access throughout the country.

This is the type of common sense that should be guiding our policy, not

a knee-jerk, trigger-happy approach that alienates our friends and allies. We should work closely with the United Nations. We should remember that far more of Iraq's weapons were discovered and destroyed by the inspectors after the Gulf War than were destroyed by our troops during the Gulf War.

I have no doubt Saddam Hussein is lying. He has lied countless times before. He is likely hiding weapons, including chemical and biological weapons. The U.N. inspectors' report leaves little doubt of that.

The Iraqis have not explained what happened to thousands of tons of chemical weapons material, and other biological munitions they had in their possession 5 years ago. There have been discoveries of empty chemical weapons shells and documents they had not disclosed. These are serious discrepancies by a regime that is among the world's most dangerous, deceptive, and brutal.

There may also be other evidence of Saddam Hussein's deception that the administration has not yet revealed. But the inspectors are continuing their work, and the results so far do not justify abandoning the inspections process and sending thousands of American men and women into a war costing hundreds of billions of dollars, that will cost American lives, and the lives of innocent civilians, and could trigger a wider conflict in the Middle East, while creating more enemies and terrorists over the long run.

If Saddam Hussein is removed from power, we will all celebrate. He has terrorized the Iraqi people for decades. His security agents have sadistically tortured, even summarily executed, many thousands of people. But far more is at stake here than getting rid of Saddam Hussein. At stake is the justification for sending Americans into war absent an imminent threat to the security of the United States, the most powerful Nation on Earth.

We have heard a lot of strong rhetoric, but we have not heard a compelling case that the use of military force is the only alternative to disarm Iraq.

Last year, our President pointed to "evidence" that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons. Today, that evidence seems to be disappearing. Despite a rush to judgment by some White House officials, U.S. intelligence experts remain deeply divided on this question. The International Atomic Energy Agency says there is no evidence that Iraq has resumed its quest for nuclear weapons.

In response, the White House claims there is proof Iraq is hiding chemical and biological weapons. That proof may well exist. If it does, the administration should immediately take it to the Security Council to help convince skeptical friends and allies and to assist the inspectors in their disarmament work.

I remember when I was a student here in Washington at Georgetown University Law School at the time of the

Cuban missile crisis. President Kennedy sent his Ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, to the chambers of the United Nations. He held up irrefutable proof of the missiles being put in Cuba by the then Soviet Union. With that proof, the world rallied around the United States.

We have to remember how missteps can create more problems. The situation in North Korea today illustrates how a dangerous situation can quickly escalate unnecessarily. By taking options off the table, we are worse off today than we were a few months ago. After backing the United States into a corner, the White House is now discussing donations of food and fuel, an approach they ridiculed just a short time ago. We have to be more consistent.

Today, there are no U.N. inspectors monitoring the North Korean nuclear facilities. Tensions have dramatically increased, and we have serious disagreements with our Japanese and South Korean allies. Let us not make the same mistake in Iraq that history, both decades ago and more recently, has tried to teach us.

Saddam Hussein must be disarmed to the point that he is no longer a threat to his neighbors. U.N. resolutions must be respected and enforced. But these are matters of concern to the world, not just to the United States. We are part of the world, but we are not the whole world.

The U.N. inspectors need time to complete their work. It is divisive and damaging for the United States, having secured a Security Council resolution, two months later to short-circuit the U.N. process in the name of enforcing that same U.N. resolution.

To those officials in the White House and the Pentagon who would use the U.N. inspections as a mere excuse to justify unilateral military action, I say the same things as when I opposed the resolution authorizing the use of force that passed the Senate back in September: This Vermonter never has and never will give a blank check to this President or to any President to wage war.

The next weeks and months will be decisive. Let's hope the Iraqi Government fulfills its obligations and the inspectors finish the job in a manner that gives credibility to their conclusions, whatever those conclusions may be. Let's work with the U.N. Security Council and our allies to find a way forward.

Unlike his father a decade ago, this President has not built a broad coalition for military action. If diplomacy fails, I am confident we can win a military victory. After all, we have the most powerful military in the world. But acting unilaterally would be extremely costly. It would lead to a prolonged U.S. military occupation of Iraq, the expenditure of tens, even hundreds, of billions of dollars. It would damage our relations with key allies, and it would further inflame the anti-American extremism that is growing

throughout the Muslim world, extremism that threatens us more than anything else today.

It threatens us because even today terrorists plan their attacks within the United States, not in the Persian Gulf. We need the world to be with us. A broad-based coalition is indispensable for achieving long-term peace in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, as well as our continuing efforts against international terrorism.

This war is not inevitable. We should not talk or act as if it is. But if war does come, let the United States be able to say we did everything we could to try to solve this another way; that we worked in concert with the United Nations; and that the U.N. was strengthened in the process. We must be convinced that war is justified; that the sacrifice of American lives can be justified; that America taking this step of a preemptive war can be justified not only today but, in history's eyes, decades from now.

I do not believe that threshold has yet been reached. So many of the American people do not. Our allies do not.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I understand we are in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

HOMELAND SECURITY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, following the attacks of September 11, many Americans found themselves feeling, perhaps for the first time, a sense of vulnerability. Terrorists had successfully infiltrated our country, hijacked four of our jetliners, and committed mass suicide. Using simple tactics and superb coordination, they singlehandedly changed the American mindset in a matter of minutes.

President Bush recognized that our way of life changed drastically on September 11. During an address to a joint session of Congress and the American people 9 days after the attacks, President Bush said the following:

On September 11, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars—but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war—but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks—but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this brought upon us in a single day—and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.

For nearly 10 years prior to that, our country enjoyed unprecedented peace

and prosperity. The economy grew at an unbelievable rate. We were at peace with our neighbors. We focused on health-care, welfare, education, and other domestic priorities. The fall of the Soviet Union eliminated the threat to our Nation. Our defense budget shrank; our intelligence resources dwindled; and our homeland defenses remained virtually nonexistent. The biggest problem our military faced was not how best to invade Iraq, but how to keep enlisted families off food stamps.

Our mind simply was elsewhere. A number of blue-ribbon commissions tried to get our attention. The Bremer Commission pointed out the deficiencies of our intelligence collection efforts. The Gilmore Commission revealed how disconnected, disparate, and dysfunctional our homeland security efforts were. And, the Hart-Rudman Commission discussed how much our Federal Government needed to be restructured to better combat terrorism. Yet many of the recommendations from these commissions were pushed aside as being impractical, too expensive, or unnecessary. As it turns out, they were right, and on September 11, we paid the price.

Since that dreadful day, we have made considerable progress. We have rid Afghanistan of its terrorists-run government, disrupted terrorist operations around the world, and taken steps to improve our homeland defenses. I was pleased last November when the Congress, after 3 months of debate, approved legislation to create the Department of Homeland Security. This Department will pull together 22 agencies and nearly 200,000 Federal employees. It will not be an easy task. Tom Ridge, the new Secretary of the Department, will have his hands full for many years to come.

The Department of Defense has also taken a number of measures to improve our homeland defense. The establishment of Northern Command was a significant organizational step toward fighting terrorism at our borders. The new commander, Air Force Gen. Ed Eberhart, will be responsible for the defense of the United States, including land, aerospace and sea defenses. NORTHCOM will also provide military assistance to civil authorities, including crisis and subsequent consequence management operations should such assistance be necessary.

This past year the Congress went further when it created a new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Security within Department of Defense. The assistant secretary will be responsible for providing guidance and planning assistance to the various combatant commands, including NORTHCOM. The Senate Armed Services Committee, of which I am a member, held a hearing today on the President's nominee, Paul McHale, for this position.

Despite our efforts to build stronger homeland defenses, our country finds itself confronted by numerous threats on several different fronts. As we