

War is easy; but peace, peace is hard. When we hurt, when we fear, when we feel vulnerable or hopeless, it is easy to listen to what is most base within us. It is easy to divide the world into us and them, to fear them, to hate them, to fight them, to kill them. War is easy.

But peace is hard. Peace is right, it is just, and it is true. But it is not easy to love thy enemy. No, peace is hard. As my friend and mentor, Dr. King, said when he spoke about the Vietnam War: "War is not the answer. Let us not join those who shout war. These are days which demand wise restraint and calm reasonableness." He was right then and the wisdom of those words holds true today. War was not the answer then, and it is not the answer today. War is never the answer. It is not too late to stop our rush to war. Let us give peace a chance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BISHOP of Utah). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Virginia addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Saddam Hussein has been and continues to be a threat to Iraq's neighbors, his own people, and to all peace-loving nations of the world. The United States and the United Nations have recognized the dangers posed by his pursuit of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. The world has wisely taken action to proactively address this threat.

The issue is not whether Saddam Hussein is a terrible dictator or whether or not he is dangerous. He clearly is. The issue is whether a preemptive war is justified now. I believe the answer is no. Iraq is neither an immediate or an imminent threat to the security of the American people. Aggressive inspections and disarmament by the United Nations with the full support of member states can be successful. We have time to work together with the international community to collectively address the threat of Iraq without resorting to war and without endorsing a policy of preemptive attack.

Following the devastation of World War II, the United States showed tremendous leadership in the world as we created international institutions and a framework of international law to prevent war and to sustain and maintain peace. We were the leaders in promoting a world where conflicts could be resolved peacefully and cooperatively. While never perfect, this system

of international institutions has been remarkably effective. I and many others around the world are shocked and dismayed by the unilateral, confrontational approach that this administration has taken in the world arena. We must recognize the consequences in the world community of our rejection of Kyoto, of the International Criminal Court, of the treaty to ban land mines, and our own withdrawal from the ABM treaty. We must be mindful about how our criticisms of the U.N. and NATO are heard throughout the world community.

We have to recognize that after 9-11, the world came together in solidarity with our loss, working with us to find the perpetrators, to break up al Qaeda and arrest its leaders, to interrupt the flow of money. It should have been crystal clear that fighting terrorism and protecting American security would require our friends and our allies; cooperation, not confrontation. Yet the administration instead engaged in a single-minded drive to achieve its Iraqi objectives at any cost instead of developing a policy to deal with Iraq by working with our allies, by working with the world community. Even if the administration gets what it wants this time, what is the long-term damage to our international relationships? How will it impact our efforts to stop terrorism and protect the security of the American people?

I am worried. The people that I represent are very anxious. It seems more and more likely that war is around the corner. What will that war be? Are the American people prepared? The American people are expecting, I think, a smaller conflict than we are walking into, perhaps a Grenada, a Panama or the first Gulf War; quick, hopefully few casualties, troops in and out within weeks or months. I think that this war would be different. After a large ground war to capture the entire country, we will likely occupy Iraq. The Army Chief of Staff, General Shinseki, estimated that we would need 100,000 troops or more for the occupation. We have no idea how long they would have to stay. Mr. President, we need to hear about your exit strategy, and we need to hear that now.

The congressional debate that we had last fall to authorize the use of force against Iraq did not prepare the American people for the ramifications of this war and what this administration truly envisions. I call on this administration to answer the myriad questions that have been posed by numerous Members of Congress on behalf of our constituencies before ground troops are committed. All of Congress and all of America stand by our troops, but we think it is absolutely incumbent upon this administration to answer our questions.

U.S.-FRENCH RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF IRAQI CONFLICT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, in the current international debate on Iraq, I have the very clear impression that the United States and France are talking past each other and not listening to each other. More particularly, that the United States is not listening to the very nuanced views expressed by the French. My assessment of the dialogue is that President Chirac and President Bush are in accord on the objective of disarming Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and the capability to deliver such weapons. The Bush administration, however, has concluded that the only way to achieve this objective is through military action. In contrast, the French and many other U.S. allies and friendly observers favor continued diplomacy in the firm belief that a vigorous, intensive weapons inspection program will attain the disarmament objective.

It would be useful for the Bush administration to think more constructively about France's contributions to international dialogue and its distinguished record of multilateral peacekeeping as well as military intervention when justified.

A few highlights would be instructive: France was a valuable partner for the United States during the Gulf War in 1991, deploying 10,000 troops and 100 aircraft in Operation Desert Storm. From 1991 through 1995, France was an active ally to secure the peace in Bosnia. During this important peacekeeping mission, 70 French soldiers were killed and more than 600 wounded. In 1999, France deployed the greatest number of aircraft and flew the largest number of sorties of any combatant in Operation Allied Force in Kosovo. France today is contributing the largest contingent of peacekeepers in the Balkans, more than any other nation, including our own.

After September 11, French troops participated in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan where France continues to place its troops in harm's way to provide security in that critical region. French President Chirac was the first foreign leader to pay his respects to the United States in person following the September 11 attacks. This is a very significant record of valuable contributions that France has made where and when needed to combat terror and secure peace.

Our foreign policy would be better served by respecting the historical reality of the U.S.-French relationship. We need to listen to the wise counsel of this longstanding friend of America which has learned how to deal with the Islamic terrorist threat from its own painful experience in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco and the large Arabic-Islamic population among its own citizenry.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a New York Times op-ed piece on this very subject.

A WARNING ON IRAQ, FROM A FRIEND
(By Jean-David Levitte)

WASHINGTON.—Reading the papers from both sides of the Atlantic, I sometimes wonder whether the impending war is not between France and the United States. I would like to strongly reaffirm what, in the heart of the French people, is a longstanding reality: the friendship between France and America began in the early days of your fight for independence and has endured throughout the centuries.

America rescued my country twice in the last century—something we will never forget. Today we stand side by side in many parts of the world, including Afghanistan. France is the largest contributor of troops to NATO operations. Our friendship is a treasure, and it must be maintained, protected, enhanced.

However, the polls are clear: 78 percent of French people oppose a military intervention in Iraq. Polls are similar in most other countries, including in Eastern Europe. European governments may be divided over the use of force in Iraq, but public opinion is united.

There are, in my view, three reasons the mood is so cautious. The first relates to our assessment of what is far and away the biggest threat to world peace and stability: Al Qaeda.

French intelligence is clear that not since the Algerian war 40 years ago has my country been under such an immediate threat. Last May, 11 French citizens were killed in a suicide bombing in Karachi, Pakistan. In the fall a French tanker was attacked by Al Qaeda off Yemen. And in December, near Paris, we arrested several suspects who were suspected of close links to Al Qaeda and of planning terrorist attacks in France.

Terrorist suspects have also been arrested elsewhere in Europe—in Britain, Spain and Italy—belonging to groups connected with networks active in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Algeria and Bosnia. Yet we haven't seen any evidence of a direct link between the Iraqi regime and Al Qaeda.

A second reason for the reluctance of the French people is that Iraq is not viewed as an immediate threat. Thanks to the determination of President Bush and the international community—and to the inspections that destroyed more armaments between 1991 and 1998 than did the Persian Gulf war itself, and which have now been reinforced with stronger means and bigger teams—Saddam Hussein is in a box. And the box has been closed with the inspectors in it.

Europeans consider North Korea a greater threat. Imagine what a sense of security we all would feel if, as in Iraq, 100 inspectors were proceeding with unimpeded inspections throughout North Korea, including the president's palaces.

A third reason for the cautious mood relates to the consequences of a war in Iraq. We see Iraq as a very complex country, with many different ethnic groups, a tradition of violence and no experience of democracy. You can't create democracy with bombs—in Iraq; it would require time, a strong presence and a strong commitment.

We also worry about the region—considering that no peace process is at work for the moment in the Middle East, that none of the great powers seem able to foster one, and that a war in Iraq could result in more frustration and bitterness in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

People in France and more broadly in Europe fear that a military intervention could fuel extremism and encourage Qaeda recruitment. A war could weaken the indispensable international coalition against terrorism and worsen the threat of Islamic terrorism.

The inspections should be pursued and strengthened, and Saddam Hussein must be made to cooperate actively. War must remain the very last option.

ASBESTOS LITIGATION INUNDATES THE COURT SYSTEM

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Steven Kazan, the prominent asbestos victims lawyer, informed the Congress: "Asbestos litigation has become a nightmare because the courts have been inundated by the claims of people who may have been exposed to asbestos but who are not sick, who have no lung function deficit. This flood is conjured up through systematic, for-profit screening programs designed to find potential plaintiffs with some x-ray evidence 'consistent with' asbestosis. Ironically, and tragically, in many States that x-ray evidence triggers the statute of limitations, literally forcing the filing of premature claims. These claims are choking the asbestos litigation system and keeping the courts from doing their real job, providing compensation for people who are genuinely injured by asbestos diseases."

Mr. Speaker, the current state of asbestos litigation is a public health tragedy in which the claims of truly ill, terminally ill cancer patients and others who struggle to breathe are mixed together with those plaintiffs who suffer no impairments. In 2001, almost 90,000 individuals joined in asbestos-related personal injury suits against 6,000 entities, but only 10 percent of those claimants have any symptoms of asbestos-related illnesses. These legal tactics force defendants into settlements because they cannot take the risk of "betting the company" on pronouncements of a judge and jury. This first happened in 1982 when 16,000 asbestos personal injury suits forced Johns Manville Corporation into bankruptcy. Since then, the uncertainty of asbestos litigation has driven nearly 70 major American companies into bankruptcy.

During the past 20 years, 2,100 asbestos cases have been tried or settled at a total cost of \$54 billion, with over half of the money used to pay lawyers. As the Wall Street Journal points out, that is more money than the cost of 9-11, Enron and WorldCom put together.

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It certainly is a lot of money, but sick plaintiffs are not getting their fair share. The Manville Asbestos Claim Trust created by the bankruptcy court started paying claims in 1988 and was depleted in just 2 years. Today Manville pays just 5 cents on the dollar to claimants, and more money flows out to individuals with no impairments than to people who are truly sick. The truest victims of this tragedy are those who deserve quick and fair compensation for the illnesses they suffer.

However, this problem has more victims. The long-term economic cost paid by all Americans is staggering. According to the RAND Corporation, another \$150 billion to \$200 billion will be spent on asbestos litigation if nothing is done. To date, \$54 billion has been expended. Without reform 423,000 American jobs will be lost. Local governments will spend millions on unemployment benefits, job retraining, and medical coverage for displaced workers and their families. Workers in bankrupt firms will not only lose their jobs, but their retirement security will slip away as they watch the value of their 401(K) accounts drop by 25 percent.

The ever-burgeoning caseload has spawned criticism even from Supreme Court justices who warn that the asbestos litigation crisis is slowing the administration of justice nationwide, and therefore, Congress must act. These complaints span the ideological spectrum of the Supreme Court, including court liberals like Ruth Bader Ginsberg and moderates like David Souter. In 1999, Souter wrote: "The elephantine mass of asbestos cases . . . defies customary judicial administration and calls for national legislation." Opining on the same case, Rehnquist, Scalia, and Kennedy also begged Congress to act. Others are joining the chorus.

Both the Washington Times and the Washington Post called on Congress to move asbestos litigation reform. Just 2 weeks ago, even the American Bar Association voted to support medical standards that would bring the cases of truly sick asbestos plaintiffs to the front of the docket.

Asbestos victims, business leaders, lawyers, and opinion leaders all agree. The need for reform is clear. Therefore, today I am introducing the Asbestos Compensation Act of 2003. This bill establishes medical criteria to expedite the claims of the truly ill and gives these victims access to quick and fair compensation. Any worker who feared he was exposed to asbestos could be tested by a qualified doctor in his area identified by the Justice Department. Those found to be injured would have the value of their impairments determined in accordance with a fair formula, and the worried well would retain the right to return at a later date if they developed symptoms of asbestos-related illness.

The Justice Department would contact corporations named by the workers as responsible for injuries, apportioning liability in accordance with the facts and a set liability formula. Many contacted corporations would accept these settlement offers since they would avoid the expensive legal battles of staying in court.

Mr. Speaker, this is a cloud on our entire economy, affecting 900 stocks in the stock market and the 401(K) and other retirement savings of all of our constituents. I ask for rapid support of