

The necessity for Congressional action is highlighted by the recent attacks of the country's ruling military junta on Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's pro-democracy opposition, and her supporters. These attacks illustrate that Burma's regime has grown more oppressive than ever, despite worldwide condemnation.

TGA International Committee Chairman Michael Korchmar of the Leather Specialty Company, noted that, "TGA also wants to recognize and applaud the efforts of its own members that have already imposed bans on U.S. imports of Burmese travel goods from their own firms. Thanks in large part to the efforts of TGA members, U.S. imports of travel goods from Burma fell an incredible 74 percent between 2001 and 2002." Furthermore, TGA applauds the efforts of numerous U.S. and international governmental and non-governmental organizations to force Burma to respect the basic human rights of its citizens.

TRAVEL GOODS ASSOCIATION,
Princeton, NJ, June 12, 2003.

POLICY STATEMENT ON BURMA, JUNE 12, 2003

The Travel Goods Association (TGA)—the national trade association of the travel goods (luggage, briefcases, handbags, backpacks, flatgoods) industry—hereby expresses its strong support for a full and immediate ban on U.S. travel goods imports from Burma and strongly encourages the U.S. government to:

Impose an immediate and total ban on U.S. imports of travel goods from Burma;

Maintain this ban until Burma's rulers demonstrate that they respect and enforce basic human and labor rights for its own citizens;

Continue both unilaterally and through multilateral organizations to exert diplomatic, economic, and political pressure on Burma to respect and enforce basic human rights for its own citizens; and

Sign into law current legislation in Congress to impose such sanctions.

The TGA supports a U.S. ban on Burmese travel goods because Burma's military regime has:

Consistently rejected international demands to stop government-sanctioned forced and child labor practices against its own people;

According to the U.S. government's "2002 Country Report on Human Rights Practices" on Burma, "... continued to restrict worker rights, ban unions, and used forced labor for public works and for the support of military garrisons. Other forced labor, including forced child labor remained a serious problem, despite recent ordinances outlawing the practice;" and

Repeatedly failed to comply with internationally recognized conventions on labor, including forced and child labor. Due to its "widespread and systematic" use of forced labor, the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2000, for the first time in its history, called on all ILO members to impose sanctions on Burma.

Through its trade policy, TGA:

"Promotes best practices to ensure that goods are produced in a socially responsible manner," by "Encouraging TGA members to operate under programs that foster socially responsible production practices compliant with applicable labor and environmental laws and regulations; Encouraging the United States, other governments and foreign trade associations to recognize and support programs designed to achieve these goals; and Pursuing policies that encourage development of human rights and democratic values in countries in which TGA members conduct business and discourage

trade with countries that promote or support terrorism."

Strongly supports the travel goods industry's use of effective social responsibility programs;

Applauds and supports the efforts of TGA member companies that have already imposed bans on U.S. imports of Burmese travel goods for their own firms;

Recognizes and applauds the efforts of numerous U.S. and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations to force Burma to respect the basic human rights of its citizens.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for morning business.

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

CONTINUING CHALLENGES IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, although our attention today is focused on the persistent attacks against U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq and the escalation of the bloodshed between Israelis and Palestinians, it is imperative that we not ignore the challenges we continue to face in Afghanistan.

In southeast Afghanistan, U.S. soldiers continue to battle with the remnants of al-Qaida and the Taliban, whose fighters have managed to regroup across the border inside Pakistan. Despite hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. aid, the national impact has been difficult for many Afghans to see. Afghanistan is such a large, inaccessible, impoverished country that it will take many billions of dollars over many years to recover from decades of war, and that will be possible only if adequate security exists to implement these programs. Security will remain elusive as long as political and economic power outside of Kabul continues to be wielded by regional warlords.

An article by Carlotta Gall in yesterday's New York Times provides a sobering description of the continuing challenges in Afghanistan. I hope officials at USAID, the State Department, the Defense Department, and OMB took the time to read it. As with so many aid programs, we often focus on the trees and lose sight of the forest. We can point to lots of small success stories—new well dug here, a bridge repaired there, more girls enrolled in school. But when you step back the picture looks very different, as Ms. Gall's article shows.

We and our Allies have major stakes in Afghanistan's future, and I am confident that we will remain engaged. But let's do the job that needs to be done, not half measures. Without a more effective strategy to enhance security, strengthen the central government and support civil society, we will fall far short of our goals.

I ask unanimous consent that Ms. Gall's June 11, 2003, article in the New

York Times entitled "In Warlord Land, Democracy Tries Baby Steps" be printed in the RECORD.

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

IN WARLORD LAND, DEMOCRACY TRIES BABY STEPS

KABUL, Afghanistan, June 10.—In the hushed, rose-filled gardens of the royal palace in Kabul, life seems calm and good. Under the chandeliers of the meeting hall upstairs, President Hamid Karzai, just back from a trip to Britain and a meeting with the queen, manages to combine an expression of condolence for German peacekeepers killed in a suicide bomb attack in the capital Saturday with an upbeat assessment of the situation in his country.

The heavily armed American bodyguards who stand in the gardens and by the windows of the palace have become like the wallpaper, so much are they part of the scene now. The Taliban threat in the south and southeast, the car bomber who drove this week right into the city, the persistent factional fighting in the north of the country, all seem far away.

But in the last few months there has been a crisis of confidence in Afghanistan, a sense that the security situation may be spiraling downward and that the rise of regional warlords may be more than a temporary phenomenon. Attacks on peacekeepers and aid workers are increasing. After more than a year of waiting patiently for results, people here are increasingly asking: are the Americans getting it right?

Today, as American forces in Iraq struggle to establish order, as one or two American soldiers seem to fall every day, it seems likely to be a question the United States will soon face in Iraq as well.

Even the most pessimistic Afghanistan watchers acknowledge that this time is different from the sliding chaos of the early 1990's. The Americans are not going to turn their back on Afghanistan the way they did then, and the way they did in Iraq after the Persian Gulf war in 1991. The Americans are here and, by all accounts and appearances, here to stay.

But there is only a year left for Mr. Karzai and his American backers to get things right before his term is up. The Bonn process, which set up the interim administration led by Mr. Karzai, lays out a rapid program for a new constitution to be drawn up and approved by a grand assembly this October, and for national elections to be held next June.

For Afghanistan, one key to establishing order is the disarmament of the factional armies around the country. The United Nations and Afghanistan's new Human Rights Commission have already stressed that if the much delayed disarmament and demobilization program does not go ahead, the drafting of the constitution and national elections could be thrown into jeopardy.

"There is a real, but still avoidable, risk that the Bonn process will stall if security is not extended to the regions, and that Afghans will lose confidence in the central government if it cannot protect them," the United Nations special representative to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, told the Security Council in New York last month.

Another difficulty is that the allies are tackling the problems in piecemeal fashion, a strategy that will only advance the country by tiny steps, critics say.

United States diplomats and aid officials like to draw attention to a large wall map in their embassy that is covered in a "blizzard" of yellow Post-it stickers marking every single project under way in the country. They