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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN ENSIGN, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, most Holy, how precious and steadfast is Your love. We take refuge in the shadow of Your wings and find peace in the blessing of being Your children.

Your love has given us this day and the opportunities to serve. Your love has provided us with challenges that test us and make us stronger. Your love enables us to find freedom from guilt and hope for our future. Help us not to miss Your precious presence or forget to abide in Your peace.

Give the Members of this body strength for today's journey. May they approach challenges and opportunities with reverence and respect.

Help us all to comprehend more fully what it means to rest in Your love. We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN ENSIGN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 20, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JOHN ENSIGN, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ENSIGN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in a few minutes we will resume debate on the Transportation, Treasury, and HUD appropriations bill. We had a full day yesterday, with amendments being offered and voted on and, therefore, we made very good progress. I believe the two managers are looking to wrap up the bill soon, and it is possible we could complete action on the bill during today's session. I strongly believe we can do just that.

We have several Senators coming to the floor this morning to discuss their amendments, and I hope the two managers can work with the amendment sponsors or schedule those amendments for votes. Senators should expect votes throughout the course of the day. As I mentioned all week, if we cannot finish the bill today, we will be voting on the bill tomorrow. But I would encourage people to allow us to finish today.

We will have done, after we complete this bill, 11 appropriations bills. I thank once again Chairman THAD COCHRAN for his tremendous leadership, as well as his entire committee, in leading forth on these appropriations bills. We do have one remaining bill, the Labor-HHS appropriations bill, and I plan on going to that bill following the completion of the Transportation-Treasury bill. I thank my colleagues

for the progress we have made over the course of the week, and on all these appropriations bills.

PRESIDENT MAHMOUD ABBAS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on a separate issue, today, several of my Senate colleagues and I will be hosting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and members of his Cabinet here in the United States Capitol.

I have met with President Abbas on several occasions, most recently during my trip to the Middle East in May and his visit to Washington later that month a few weeks after our visit there.

President Abbas is here to discuss ways to move the Middle East peace process forward, and how both sides can fulfill their obligations under the roadmap.

Less than 2 months ago, Israel completed its disengagement of settlers and soldiers from all 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the northern West Bank. The disengagement was conducted in a smooth and generally peaceful manner. This was a bold and courageous move by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Now President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority face the challenge of creating a secure and stable environment in Gaza. It is vital, it is critical that they succeed. The Palestinian people need to feel tangible improvements in their everyday lives, in their daily welfare, and they need to see that only peaceful dialog and negotiation can lead to a more prosperous future.

While coordination between the Israelis and Palestinians during the disengagement was not ideal, it did exist. Prior to the withdrawal, Israeli and Palestinian security officials worked to ensure a peaceful disengagement and to establish a basis for returning to the roadmap.

Recently, however, events in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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taken a turn for the worse. Rocket attacks on Israel continued to be launched from the Gaza Strip. In the last 9 months, 219 Palestinians have died in internecine clashes. In the West Bank city of Ramallah, Hamas has claimed responsibility for abducting and killing an Israeli settler after issuing demands for the release of Palestinian prisoners. This past weekend, three Jewish settlers were killed and five were wounded in shootings in the West Bank. The Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigade has claimed responsibility for these attacks.

These events threaten to derail the peace process and to move both sides backward. We have reached a critical juncture in the Middle East peace process. The Israeli disengagement from Gaza offers a tremendous opportunity to get the peace process and the roadmap back on track. To succeed, both sides must fulfill their responsibilities, but this requires a secure environment in order to act.

For the Palestinians, this means ending incitement, dismantling the terrorist groups, and disarming the militias. This is what I will impress on President Abbas when I meet with him later today. The violence must be renounced, and it must end. Making progress on these issues can set the stage for Israel to move forward on the release of Palestinian prisoners and relieving restrictions on travel.

I commend President Abbas for his leadership. He has made measurable progress in advancing internal reforms in the Palestinian Authority. More is clearly needed, though, and more must be done.

For example, the PA security forces must be reformed, unified, and given the mandate to enforce the rule of law and establish order in the West Bank and Gaza. President Abbas needs and deserves our continued support, and the Congress has provided the funding to help the Palestinian people and make reform a reality.

The United States remains committed to President Bush's vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. We will continue to work with both parties to fulfill their obligations under the roadmap toward a true and lasting peace.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in morning business for 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I appreciate the courtesy of the Senator from Michigan.

SECURING OUR BORDERS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise to speak briefly to highlight again the

Homeland Security bill, which this body passed and the House passed and the President signed this week. I think it is important when we do something that is substantive and addresses what I see—and I think most people see—as a very significant issue for our Nation, which is controlling our borders, we should talk about it a little bit so the people understand what we did because in the activities that so dominate the daily news—whether it is a hurricane or the issues in relation to a Supreme Court nominee—things that are moving in the right direction tend to get lost. But what is moving in the right direction right now is our attempts as a nation, with the President's leadership and this Congress's aggressiveness, in the area of trying to control our borders.

The Homeland Security appropriations bill—and I have the good fortune to chair the Homeland Security Subcommittee and the ranking member is Senator BYRD—I do not think of him as the ranking member; quite honestly, I think of him as the senior member—is a bill that is structured around the theory that we should address threat.

It was a unique approach to an appropriations bill because it is a unique issue. Most appropriations bills take on a variety of different questions and the management of the Government and how the Government is functioning. But we decided to do the bill based on a theme, to be quite honest. The theme we tried to address was: What is the threat? And how can we best address it?

We concluded that the prime threats are, No. 1, the use of a weapon of mass destruction against our Nation. I intend to talk about that issue later on as we move into the new BioShield bill, which has been put together by Senator BURR from North Carolina. He has done such an extraordinary job. This bill did make major initiatives in the area of trying to fight the use of a weapon of mass destruction and getting prepared to deal with that type of a threat.

The second major threat we determined was the porousness of our borders. The simple fact is too many people are coming into this country today whom we don't know, and they are coming in illegally. Not only that, but we don't know, when people come across the border legally, who they are and what their purposes are and whether they may be wanting to cause us harm.

We have two major problems. We have the problem relative to people. In addition, we have the problem relative to cargo. The fact is, our ports of entry are basically open to allowing in cargo that may be a threat to us, cargo which might have in it a weapon which might be used against us.

So this bill reallocated resources, and we made some very difficult decisions. We took significant resources from other accounts, where it could arguably be claimed they were needed, but

we decided, in the elements of priority, it was more important to move the funds into the border issues and move those dollars to the border.

We expanded—working in the context of a continuum because we had done a supplemental earlier which attempted to address the same issues as part of a package—working as a theme, the issue of protecting our borders and making them more secure. We did this by significantly expanding the number of feet on the ground because when you come right down to it, it is how many people you have on the borders looking for people who are trying to come across the borders illegally which determines whether you are going to be successful in stopping those people.

So we expanded by 15 percent, approximately, the number of Border Patrol agents. Now, this is only a step in the right direction, but it is a fairly significant step. Some would say: Why didn't you put even more Border Patrol agents into the system? Well, quite honestly, the system cannot handle it. We do not have the training capacity to train more than about 1,500 Border Patrol agents every year. Unfortunately, it is very hard to find people to do this job who meet the qualifications we have because the qualifications are very high and the people who do this job of serving in our Border Patrol agency are individuals who are highly sought after by other agencies and they are people who have other opportunities. To attract them into the Border Patrol agency is a challenge. Finding people is a challenge. But we have put in the pipeline now the dollars necessary to add 1,500 new agents.

In addition, we are expanding the training facilities so that as we move into the later years, we will be able to train more than 1,500 agents a year. My goal—and I believe the goal of other members of the committee, some of whom are in the Chamber today—is to be training approximately 2,000 new agents every year, until we get to 10,000 new agents from the baseline of about 10,000. So we will have essentially a force we have doubled.

But as you double the force of agents, you also have to double the infrastructure that supports them, or dramatically increase it, anyway. So this bill also addresses that. It builds new facilities. And especially it addresses the issue of detention, which is a critical issue for us because we simply know today that as we catch people who come into our country who are not Mexican and whose purposes we don't know but who we know are here illegally, we are not able to detain them.

We are not able to send them back to their country of origin because we do not have the capacity to do so. This bill, again, tries to address that issue and does so in a fairly aggressive way, adding, when coupled with the supplemental, approximately 2,000 new beds to detention capability, getting us over 20,000 beds in detention capability. Our goal—and we are on this path now—is