

a daily basis. Yesterday, 170 Iraqis were killed that we know of, 4 Americans. I haven't received the reports this morning on what happened last night. We also mourn for people like these gallant individuals, who were there trying to make the world a better place. Our thoughts go out to the families of these four individuals. Later today, their names will be spread across the RECORD of the U.S. Senate.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Madam President, on the Democratic side, we have six 10-minute speeches. I ask unanimous consent that each Democratic Senator have their full time and, of course, the Republicans would have their full 60 minutes when we complete ours.

Now I ask unanimous consent that Senator SALAZAR be recognized, followed by Senator GREGG, if he is here, Senator CONRAD, Senator BENNETT, Senator DURBIN, and me, in that order.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first hour under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the second hour under the control of the Republican leader or his designee.

The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

OUR WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam President, just days before the start of the 110th Congress, I had the great honor of traveling to Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador in South America with our majority leader, HARRY REID, as well as four of my other colleagues: Senator JUDD GREGG from New Hampshire, Senator BOB BENNETT from Utah, Senator KENT CONRAD from North Dakota, and Senator DICK DURBIN of Illinois. It was a great and wonderful trip for me for a number of reasons.

First, my own view is that over the last decade, and perhaps even more, this country has not paid enough attention to our relationship with Latin America and South America. For me, there is a special bond and relationship because of my own history in the Southwest of the United States. My family founded the city of Santa Fe, NM, now 409 years or four centuries ago. So before Plymouth Rock was

founded or Jamestown was founded, my family was already living in what is now the northern part of the State of New Mexico.

The place I come from still bears the same names that were put on those places by the Spaniards who settled northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. There is our ranch in the San Luis Valley. When you look around to the mountains to the east, those mountain ranges are called the Sangre de Cristo Mountains or the Blood of Christ range. The mountain ranges in the west at 14,000 feet are named after John the Baptist, the San Juan Mountains, and the river that runs through our ranch is called the Rio San Antonio, the Saint Anthony River. That history has always created a very special bond with our neighbors to the south in Mexico and Central America and Latin America.

When Senator REID and the delegation of six Senators went to South America, it was important for me because what we were doing as a collective group was making a strong statement to Latin America that they are our friends and that we will be working closely with Latin America to make sure that the bond and the relationship between the United States of America and those countries to the south is a bond that is strong and one that will continue.

I also was very pleased with the fact that it was a bipartisan delegation. As we met in those countries with the Presidents of Bolivia and Ecuador, it was important that we were one voice, telling the leaders of those countries that we would find ways in which we would strengthen the relationship between the United States and those countries. That signalled a friendship and mutual interest on the part of the U.S. Government to those countries, and it was very important.

I believe we need to recommit ourselves to strengthening our relationships with Latin America. I also believe our failure to do so will imperil the U.S. strategic interests in fighting terrorism, combating drugs, and helping democratic governments throughout Latin America.

Over 45 years ago, there was another Senator taking on a new role in our Nation's history in this city, and at that time he reached out to Latin America with a program that he called the Alliance for Progress. On March 13, 1961, as the Cold War was beginning to mushroom, President John Kennedy launched the Alliance for Progress—known in Spanish throughout Latin America as la Alianza del Progreso—with a vision to create a strong and united Western Hemisphere of nations. On that momentous day, President Kennedy spoke with remarkable clarity about our country's connection with Latin America. He said:

We meet together as firm and ancient friends, united by history and experience and by our determination to advance the values of American civilization. This world of ours

is not merely an accident of geography. Our continents are bound together by a common history. And our people share a common heritage—the quest for the dignity and the freedom of man.

The effort of the Alliance for Progress was not as successful as President Kennedy wished. Indeed, over the next half century, we witnessed political upheaval in many of the Latin American countries, and we saw strained relationships between the United States and some of these nations. But the Alliance for Progress did work to establish good will among the people of the Americas, and we can learn from its shortcomings as we continue to move forward.

As we enter 2007, I hope our six Senators have begun to shine a spotlight on our strategic alliance with Latin America. Under that spotlight, you will find the difficult and complex issues of international trade, immigration, and the battles we wage together against the awful scourge of drugs which affects the populations of those countries as well as ours. We also face the challenge of increasing economic opportunity and eliminating poverty in that part of the world.

Our first stop in South America was in Bolivia, which is one of the poorest countries in this hemisphere, with one of the largest indigenous populations in Latin America. We met with Bolivia's President, Evo Morales, who was sworn in in 2006 as the country's first indigenous President in its history. We spoke with President Morales about his concerns relating to coca production and our concerns about coca production in Bolivia. We also spoke to him about the interest of Bolivia in extending the Andean trade preferences agreement. I believe it was a productive dialog, but we must continue the dialog if we are to build a stronger relationship with the country of Bolivia and keep Bolivia from going down a path which ultimately will end up in opposition to the interests of the United States.

We also there met with the U.S. Agency for International Development and learned about the scope and impact of their projects in Bolivia. USAID is working to create economic opportunities and alleviate poverty, which is so important to improving the lives of the Bolivian population.

In Ecuador, we met with President Correa, who was busy preparing for his January 15 inauguration. He took time to meet with us, assembling his Cabinet and talking about the importance of the relationship between Ecuador and the United States. President Correa pledged to shut down the drug trafficking that is occurring in and around Ecuador and also raised the need to extend the Andean trade preferences program.

When we visited the LatinFlor flower farm, we saw firsthand the impact of this trade program. It is creating thousands upon thousands of jobs for the people of Ecuador and keeping people

there from being recruited by drug traffickers or from having to flee poverty through illegal immigration into the United States.

In Peru, we met with President Alan Garcia. The United States and Peru have long had a strong and lasting relationship.

In fact, during World War II, as Senator REID reminded the President of Peru, Peru provided our country with the strategic materials that were necessary to carry on the war and allowed the United States to set up military bases in Peru and take the fight on in the South Pacific.

President Garcia is very interested in seeing the U.S.-Peru free trade agreement approved by the U.S. Congress. While questions have been raised about this agreement, I am hopeful and confident that we will work through those issues. I look forward to learning more about this agreement and some of the issues that have been raised by some Members about the labor and environmental provisions of the agreement. I admire President Garcia's interest in formulating fundamental and long-lasting change for the poor people of Peru, to improve education, nutrition, and basic health services.

I hope Democrats and Republicans can work together to lift all of the peoples of the Western Hemisphere to a place of hope and opportunity, including those who live in the margins to the south of us. So now it is time for the United States of America to meet the eyes of our Latin American neighbors and to ensure that the many countries sharing our hemisphere will bequeath to our children a common land and future for the people of all the Americas.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. GREGG. Madam President, I also rise to discuss the recent meetings we held in South America. The nature of the meetings has been outlined by the Senator from Colorado and, obviously, the majority leader.

I think I should start by saying that I admire the majority leader for putting together the delegation—and I appreciate having participated in it—which was bipartisan. More importantly, the majority leader chose as his first outreach in the area of foreign policy, in the sense of his taking the status of majority leader of the Senate, which is a significant status, to go to these countries in South America—countries which, regrettably, we probably haven't put as much energy and effort into as we should have over the years, and countries that are important to us in a variety of ways. So I think his choice of these three nations—important nations that are major players in our neighborhood—was significant and appropriate. I appreciated the chance to participate in it.

In all three of these nations we are seeing significant change—change

which I sort of sense is in a historical context of repeating, in many instances, past actions. South America has, unfortunately, had a history of going from democracy to military leadership to populace leadership and then back to democracy. These three nations have all recently held very democratic elections, and they have elected very outspoken leaders, some of whose views I agree with and some of whose I definitely do not agree with. But they are in the vortex of a movement in Central and South America involving the question of populace socialism as presented by, in part, obviously, Fidel Castro and, more recently, President Chavez of Venezuela. We have seen in that sort of a populist, socialist movement, a distinct antagonism toward democracy. In fact, Cuba hasn't had an election in 40 years. I don't know whether we will see a real election in Venezuela again in the foreseeable future. So I think it was important for us to show the American spirit, which is committed democracy, liberty, and individual rights, and having an electoral process that works—to show that spirit by coming to these three nations that recently held elections and elected new leadership.

There are a lot of issues involving these nations. Bolivia and Ecuador and Peru have significant questions relative to poverty. But there are three issues which dominate our relationship with them, which have been discussed already, and which we discussed with their leadership extensively at different levels, starting with the Presidency of those three countries. Of course, the first is the question of illegal drugs such as cocaine.

I think it is rather difficult for us as a nation to go to a country such as Bolivia, which is exporting cocaine products mostly to Europe, or Ecuador and Peru, which export it here—it is hard to go to those countries because we don't come with clean hands. Basically, we are the demand. As long as we have the demand in this Nation, which is so overwhelming, somebody is going to supply that demand. So we have put these nations at risk by us having our demand for the use of these illegal drugs, especially cocaine. I feel compassion for these nations in that we have undermined them by our Nation putting so much pressure on them regarding illegal trafficking. You have to admire their leaders.

It was great to travel with the Senator from Colorado and his wife. It was nice to have an American face that spoke pure Spanish. It gave us a presentation that immediately gave us identity with those nations. So it was wonderful to have the Senator and his wife there, especially for those of us who allegedly spoke Spanish when we were in college but never really did. Each one of these Presidents was totally committed to fighting illegal drugs. They recognize the harm it is doing to their nations. So we want to support them in that effort.

Secondly is the issue of immigration, which again, to some degree, you can understand their problem, which is that they have people who want to support their families and they come to America to do that, and a fair number come illegally. How we deal with that as a country is a big issue for us and for those nations. Money coming back into those countries as a result of Ecuadorians or Peruvians working in America and sending money back significantly contributes to their economy. They want to have the ability for their people to come here legally. We want to structure a system to help them.

The reason people are leaving those countries goes to the third issue, which is trade. They need good jobs in their country. There are products that they can provide in their countries which, in the classic context of comparative advantage, they can do better than we can. The same is true vice versa. In fact, we can do a lot of things better than they can. So open and free trade is something they want. Every one of those leaders wants open and free trade with the U.S., which is a very positive attitude on their part because we can produce more products that they need, with value added, and they can produce products we need. I suspect we will be in a surplus fairly quickly with each one of these countries if we go to a true free market. That will raise the standard of living down there, which will relieve, to some degree, the pressure for illegal immigration to the U.S.

So it works to our benefit, and not only from the standpoint of trade. One of the interesting statistics I saw in Peru was that trade from New Hampshire increased 880 percent over the last 2 years—that increase of New Hampshire-produced goods going into Peru. We started at a very low base, but a couple of corporations I am familiar with have significantly expanded economic activity in Peru and, as a result, the opportunity. So there are two pending agreements, one of which we extended, the Indian Free Trade Agreement and Drug Enforcement Act, and the other the Peruvian Free Trade Agreement. I especially think we need to address the second one.

Peru has a government that is more market oriented, that is not pursuing nationalization or quasi-nationalization of any foreign investors there, as has happened in Ecuador and Bolivia. Therefore, we should be sympathetic to that government. This agreement is not going to significantly expand issues that are international in the sense of the free trade bite, and we have those issues with China, obviously, and Southeast Asia. To the extent there are environmental and labor issues with other countries, that is not in play relative to Peru. That is not that big an economy. The Peruvian agreement has been caught up, unfortunately, in this bigger contest in the Congress, and in the popular opinion of

American political culture, on the issue of the bigger issue of free trade. We should try to separate it and move the Peruvian Free Trade Agreement forward promptly, if we can, recognizing that it will significantly improve our relationship with Peru and, more importantly, be a statement in the part of the world that we need to have a statement that we are committed to market forces in the face of what is clearly not occurring in Venezuela, which is where you are seeing massive nationalization and a compression and flattening of market forces and a flattening of democratic forces, and that is an issue about which we need to be concerned.

If we can assist Peru and Bolivia and Ecuador in being more economically successful in using a market-oriented model, that is going to undermine the capacity of Venezuela to export their form of populace socialism, which in the end is going to lead, if they are successful, to undermining the quality of life throughout South and Central America.

So it was, in my opinion, a very worthwhile trip. I learned a great deal and met a lot of interesting people. We had the opportunity to meet extraordinary people who worked in our State Department. Each one is a very talented and dedicated person. The people in the Peace Corps are extraordinary. The people working in the AID and microlending projects are doing good work and, of course, the government officials of each country, including the incoming Presidents. It was very valuable. I congratulate the majority leader for pursuing it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I join with my colleagues who were part of the delegation to Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. I also salute the majority leader, Senator REID, for making as his first trip as majority leader one to these countries in our hemisphere. I think it sent a very important signal to those countries that America is interested in them, that America cares about them, and that we want to improve relations with them. It did make an impression.

In country after country, people told us they could not remember the last time a Senate delegation from the United States had come. They could not recall a delegation of this size and this significance coming. You could tell it made an impression.

Now, why was it important to go? I believe it was important to go because, first, we see Mr. Chavez, the head of Venezuela, attempting to put together an anti-American bloc in our Southern Hemisphere. Even a casual observer can see that is being attempted.

After going to these countries and meeting with the Presidents of each—President Morales, President Correa, President Garcia, and their cabinets—

meeting with our Ambassadors in each of the countries—our outstanding Ambassador to Bolivia, Philip Goldberg, our Ambassador to Ecuador, Linda Jewell, who impressed us all with her professionalism, and our Ambassador to Peru, James Struble, deeply knowledgeable, someone who has had wide-ranging experience all around the world—I can tell my colleagues that one of my impressions from this trip was the absolute excellence of our Foreign Service people in each of these countries. They were superb.

But I was also deeply impressed by how serious Mr. Chavez is about putting together an anti-American block. In one country, he is buying 30 radio stations, putting up 30 radio stations to influence public opinion. In other countries, he had interceded in the elections—some directly, others indirectly—in order to try to achieve a result. In fact, in Peru, he went so far as to openly endorse the candidate who lost to Mr. Garcia.

It is very clear, if one goes country to country—Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador—that Mr. Chavez is working actively and, I might say, hand in glove with the Cubans, to try to influence outcomes there. We see, and have seen in recent weeks, Mr. Chavez take a series of steps, in terms of expropriation, that I think ought to send a message about his intentions.

This delegation consisted of the majority leader, Senator REID, Senator DURBIN, the majority whip, Senator BENNETT, at the time of the trip the chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, Senator GREGG, at the time of the trip chairman of the Budget Committee, and Senator SALAZAR, who really did light up the faces of people in these countries as he speaks such perfect Spanish. One could tell what a difference that makes. My wife speaks some Spanish as well. Of course, Senator SALAZAR's wife is very fluent in Spanish. One could see how it lit up people's faces when those three members of our delegation spoke Spanish.

In addition to the question of Mr. Chavez and his plans to create an anti-American bloc there were other important reasons for this trip. On trade, we have the Andean Trade Preferences Act that will expire. It was only extended for 6 months in the last Congress. Make no mistake, that Trade Preferences Act is critically important to the economies of these three countries. Literally, hundreds of thousands of jobs in those countries are at stake if the Andean Trade Preferences Act is not extended.

I know there is some controversy attached to it, but if one sees the potential outcomes of a failure to extend the Andean Trade Preferences Act, one can see that the pressure for more people to come to this country will intensify and intensify dramatically. That is not in our interest. We already have millions of people from these three countries who are in our country, many of them illegally. That is a fact. If we

want millions more to come, one way to assure that is to turn a blind eye to what is needed for those countries to have a chance to succeed.

In country after country—these three countries—we learned that half the people are living on less than \$2 a day. We are talking millions of people living on less than \$2 a day. We saw poverty that was akin to walking back into time. People are living at a level of subsistence that is almost unimaginable, certainly unimaginable in our country. We have areas of great poverty, but to see people living literally in hovels and huts without electricity, without a clean water supply, other than a river flowing by, without sewage, without anything other than the most meager subsistence kind of life is jolting. A dramatic proportion of their populations being in that condition sends a very sobering signal about the challenge facing this hemisphere. So I think it was very important that Senator REID chose as his first trip to go to countries such as Bolivia. Bolivia is the second poorest country in our hemisphere. Only Haiti is poorer.

One of the reasons we learned that delegations are not necessarily eager to go to these countries is because they are at 13,000 feet, 11,000 feet, and it takes a little adjustment to get used to it. One spends part of the time walking around with a headache. These are not places that are the first on most people's list of where they want to go. The fact that Senator REID chose this as the first place that he would take a delegation sent an important message.

Not only do we have this challenge of Mr. Chavez in Venezuela and the question of the Andean Trade Preferences Act that runs out because it was only extended 6 months in the last Congress, we also have the free-trade agreement with Peru pending. That is a controversial matter. We understand that. In the House and the Senate, that is a controversial matter. We have been assured by the trade ambassador's office that they will seek to negotiate some of the labor provisions of that agreement in order to make it more acceptable and have a greater chance of passage. I welcome that indication from the trade ambassador's office, and I hope they pursue it aggressively.

Still another important reason for this delegation going to Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru is, of course, most of the illicit drug traffic comes out of the Andean region. Bolivia is increasingly a factor. Most of their product has not come to the United States, as Senator GREGG indicated, but we all know that the drug trade, once it rears its ugly head, has spillover effects everywhere.

Peru, obviously, is an important drug-trafficking location, and President Garcia assured us of his absolute commitment to fight the drug trade. In fact, they told us of a commitment they had made in their budget to spend their money combating illicit drug trade in their country because they recognize the toxic and corrosive effect it will have in their society.

We should salute President Garcia for stepping to the plate and committing funds in a place that is very hard pressed for money, as we are in a different way, that they are committing their own money to combating the illicit drug trade and at some substantial risk to themselves. Let's be clear, those drug cartels are vicious, they are murderous, and they are not averse to taking lives from those who oppose them.

I want to indicate one exchange we had that I believe gives an example of why it is important to do this kind of outreach.

In Bolivia, we heard rumors, discussions that the Government there believed there was a plot by the United States to destabilize the Morales Government. When we met with President Morales, I raised that issue with him. I said: We have heard repeatedly you have concerns that there is a move by our Government to destabilize yours. I was able to tell him that our delegation had quizzed all aspects of our Government very closely on that question before we went into the meeting with him, and we were assured in significant detail that there is no such plan by our Government to destabilize the Morales Government, that, in fact, there has been no discussion of any move to destabilize his Government.

He became very animated at that point and went through a series of examples of events that told him or at least that gave him concern that perhaps there is a plot by our Government to destabilize them. He was very specific. He talked about an American who went into the country and set off bombs in La Paz last year. He gave as a second example of American students who had taken his picture when he was with President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. He believed that was perhaps part of an American Government enterprise to spy on him. He cited the example of his Vice President being denied boarding rights to an American airliner.

He felt all of these events were indicators—at least indicators to him—that perhaps the United States was seeking to destabilize his Government.

Ambassador Goldberg was able to go through each of these examples with him and give him answers as to why these events had nothing to do with the United States. In the case of the American who set off bombs in La Paz, this is somebody traveling on a world federalist passport, illegal documents, had nothing to do with the United States—in fact, was an unstable person and recognized as such by our Government.

On the question of the pictures being taken of President Chavez and President Morales, our Ambassador indicated that these were people who were fans of the two and were simply tourists taking pictures.

On the question of boarding being denied the Vice President on an American airline, the Ambassador was able to point out that our Government then

moved to make it right by providing our aircraft so that the Vice President of Bolivia could make the trip to the United States.

I believe this trip was important in sending a signal. It was an important chance to communicate clearly and directly our interest in the region and our desire to improve relations. I am not naive. I don't think one trip is going to change the course of history. We know that there are serious challenges on our Southern border, but reaching out, talking with people, indicating that we have an interest in improving relations, sending a signal that the majority leader of the Senate, in his first foreign trip, is coming to these countries—impoverished countries, countries that are not exactly on the list of countries that people might visit—I think was important and productive.

I thank the majority leader for leading this delegation. I thank the other Members. My wife and I found it an exceptional group of people. The people who were on this delegation—Senator REID, Senator DURBIN, Senator BENNETT, Senator GREGG, and Senator SALAZAR—did an exceptional job of representing this country.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. BENNETT. Madam President, as we have a debate around here about ethics and congressional perks and all of the rest of those issues, I am interested to find some Members of my own party, at least in the other body, boasting that they do not even have a passport, that they are so focused on their jobs that they don't do any foreign travel at all. When I was a newly elected Senator, the then-Republican leader, Bob Dole, took me and a number of other freshmen up to New Jersey to spend a day with former President Richard Nixon. Whatever you might think of Richard Nixon, I think you might confess he had a grasp of foreign affairs that was perhaps unparalleled. And he will be remembered, along with his other problems, for his opening to China, for his level of detente with Russia, and the other things he did in the foreign affairs field.

As we sat with him, one of the first things he said to us was: You cannot do your jobs as Senators if you do not travel. You need to be overseas. You need to be in these other countries. He said: I know the press will criticize you for it, but it is essential that you do it.

I have taken his advice. I have discovered he was right. The press does criticize us for it. There were articles in the Washington Post saying: What are these people doing viewing Inca ruins on a holiday at taxpayer expense, as if the whole purpose was some kind of congressional junket. And there would sit some of my friends in the House, smug in their assurance they didn't even have a passport and they were never going to be criticized for doing this.

The fact is, Nixon was right—not only for the things we learn when we travel but also for the messages we send when we travel. The majority leader had to go over the holiday period because his schedule was so full with other demands that this was the only time he could get away. I was honored and very much pleased when he asked me to come along. The fact that he made it a bipartisan delegation demonstrates his determination to make these trips have an impact both at home and abroad. It did have an impact on the six of us who were there. We have now come back with an understanding of trade issues in ways that you could not get reading a newspaper or, as one paper said: Why couldn't he find out these facts by getting on the telephone? Well, we went to a flower farm where it was pointed out to us, and we saw specific evidence, that the efforts to raise potatoes in Ecuador or corn or wheat may sound good in a political situation, as some Ecuadorian politicians are saying, but the climate and the altitude say they should be raising flowers. It gave a flavor to the whole question of free trade around the world when we realized the most efficient place to raise corn is in the Great Plains of the United States, and the most efficient place to raise baby's breath or roses is in the high altitudes and sunshine of Ecuador.

The fellow who was running the plant said to us: All we are doing is harvesting the sunshine and sending it abroad, and these people have jobs which they would not otherwise have. And this soil and this altitude means raising corn would be crazy. So let the Americans raise corn and ship it to Ecuador, and let the Ecuadorians raise roses and ship them to us.

Being there, seeing the plant, seeing the people at work, seeing the conditions they were under is worth 10,000 phone calls to have somebody try to explain it to us. But perhaps more importantly, on the political level, what Senator CONRAD was talking about, showing up in three countries that have not seen a significant congressional delegation in anybody's memory was a big deal. The press was everywhere. We were on the front page of the newspapers. We were on all of the television stations. The Ecuadorians gave us each a Panama hat. The Panama hat is misnamed. It has always been produced in Ecuador, but for some reason it got labeled the Panama hat. I wore mine. I was not an important member of the delegation as far as title is concerned, but I got on television because I was wearing a Panama hat. The Ecuadorians took sufficient pride in that I found the cameras following me around, just to say here is a U.S. Senator who is wearing one of our local products. I don't know how much good that did, but it can't have done any harm.

Senator REID handled himself with his usual good taste and aplomb in all of the exchanges and all of the press

opportunities he had. No matter how much the Presidents of some of these countries who have an anti-American background might resent the Americans, they could not, in the presence of six American Senators, including the Senate majority leader, not be impressed. They could not not be tempered in their attitudes toward the United States. And some of these Presidents who have the reputation of anti-Americanism in the meetings with others in addition to us were very gracious, and then ultimately in the presence of these Senators, outgoing in their praise of the United States and their delight at having this kind of delegation. Every single Ambassador made it clear to us that by our being there, we made their jobs easier. We made their jobs better. We demonstrated an American interest.

I was reminded when I was there on a congressional delegation of a statement I heard from the leader of a European country who opened the conversation by chiding us and saying: It has been too long since a Senator has been here. What is the matter? Aren't we important enough for you to come?

Well, if a European country that sees Senators come through about every 6 months had that reaction when it had been over a year since a Senator came, how about a South American country that had never seen a Senator in the lifetime of that particular administration.

So, again, we who were on the trip were well served by the things we learned. I have just given one quick example. My colleagues will give others. But just as importantly, the United States was well served in terms of the impact this kind of travel made on those countries that had not seen senatorial delegations.

So I intend for the rest of my Senate career to follow Richard Nixon's advice when he said: You cannot do your job if you don't travel. And I would urge those who somehow think they can get a little cheap publicity in the United States by saying: I am above that, I don't accept all of that travel—you are being derelict in your duty.

Nixon made one other comment. He said: Yes, I know the press will criticize you, but it makes great speech material when you get home. I hope that has been the case for those of us here today from whom the Senate has heard.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, let me thank my colleague from Utah for his remarks and for joining us on this trip, this official trip which Senator REID, our majority leader, put together. Senator BENNETT is correct. Members of Congress have to make a decision early in their career: Are they going to travel? I think it has been one of the most valuable experiences of my public life. I have made a point of always announcing in advance where I

am going and why I am going, giving full disclosure so that people know. I can say without exception that every time I have taken a trip, carefully planned, I have come back with a better knowledge of the world and a better appreciation of our home.

I have learned things on these trips I just could not appreciate reading in a book. I have met people on these trips who have changed my life. I don't say that loosely; I mean it.

Over 15 years ago, I met a man in Bangladesh named Muhammad Yunus. We had gone to Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries on Earth. This economics professor took us out to show us that he was testing a concept from his economics class called micro credit. He believed—this professor believed—that if you loan a small amount of money to the poorest people on Earth, they would pay it back, and that that small amount of money would change their lives. A simple concept, but he was out to prove it would work, and he proved it over and over again until that concept reached 100 million people on the face of the Earth. That man was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. I met Muhammad Yunus on an official trip. I have fought for micro credit ever since, and I consider him a real inspiration to my public life.

The same is true about Africa. When I finally was able to go to Africa, looking at micro credit food programs, I was hit smack dab between the eyes by the global AIDS crisis. It changed my public service. I came back and established the first bipartisan global AIDS caucus on Capitol Hill and have fought every single year to fight for more money to fight this scourge, this epidemic of AIDS. We have now put together an additional \$1 billion in money added to budgets, \$1 billion to be spent around the world saving lives. It has made a real difference, and it was the result of an official trip where I saw firsthand what AIDS was doing to that great continent of Africa.

So I would say to my colleagues and my critics, I believe that Members of Congress should be compelled and required to travel overseas every single year and should account for their travel and account for their refusal to travel. We have to understand that these trips help us in public service, help to project the image of our country, and help us to reach a new level of understanding with leaders around the world. This trip was no exception.

Why would we go to Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru? Of all places on Earth, why would we go there? The first trip by the majority leader, HARRY REID, was scheduled to this region of the world, and I know that many of the leaders down there were surprised, as well, to see us. It is one of the poorest places on Earth. Bolivia is the second poorest nation in our hemisphere next to Haiti. The people there struggle to survive, the majority of them on fewer than \$2 a day.

We met with indigenous Bolivian Evo Morales, now President of that coun-

try, elected in a free election. We fear that he will lean toward the Chavez model of government, and we hope he will be more open minded. This trip helped us to deliver a message. As Senator CONRAD mentioned earlier, he has misgivings about his relationship with the United States. I think what we had to say to him in our meeting with him, and Senator HARRY REID's insistence that we respect the sovereignty of his nation, was important, a very important thing for him to see.

Bolivia itself is a fascinating country in many respects—very entrepreneurial, with a sense of street justice which you don't find in many poor countries around the world. But I left there with a better understanding of the challenges facing them.

Going on to Ecuador, there was a special meeting with the President-elect, now President Rafael Correa. I felt a special attachment to President-elect Correa because in the year 2001 he received a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana. We joked about it, and we joked about his experience living in the United States. That evening I got to meet his wife born in Belgium. She served as a special education teacher in Champagne, IL. I say that because those linkages between the United States and the new leadership of Ecuador are valuable. He saw America firsthand. He said to his friends in Ecuador: What I like about America is they don't ask you your mother's lineage. They just want to know who you are, not whether you come from some aristocratic stock.

That is a good lesson to learn in America. It is a good lesson to apply around the world. It says a lot about us and our values.

We went on to Peru as well. There aren't a lot of delegations that visit Peru. I am glad we did. President Garcia is a real friend. In World War II Peru was one of our earliest allies, and they are proud of it. Our standing with Peru as a nation couldn't be better, and it gets better by the year. It tells us, though, that we have critics around the world.

First, let me say if someone stopped me on the streets of Chicago and said: Senator DURBIN, why in the world did you go to Bolivia and Ecuador and Peru, I would ask them one question: Do you think narcotics are a problem in America? I know the answer. The answer is obvious: a big problem. Not just a problem for law enforcement but for families and children, a great expense and a great danger caused by these narcotics, and the Andean region of the world that we visited supplies 100 percent of the cocaine that comes to the United States.

When Senator REID and Senator BENNETT and others and I went to these countries, we sat down with our Ambassadors, we sat down with the Drug Enforcement Agency, we sat through classified briefings and talked about our cooperative efforts with these nations to stop this flow of narcotics.

That is a priority for this Senator, and I am sure it is a priority for many others. By meeting and encouraging these leaders to continue to cooperate with the United States, I think it is going to help to make our Nation safer. When we hear firsthand from the President of Bolivia that he believes he is being shortchanged in bilateral assistance from the United States compared to other countries, it is a legitimate point and one that we brought home and one on which we will follow through. We want to make sure the flow of narcotics is reduced. We want to make America safer, reduce drug crime, and it starts with an understanding between Senators and leaders in these countries that we have the same goals.

Let me say one thing before I turn it over to our majority leader. How do we project the image of the United States? We believe that five or six Senators bringing that message is an important part of it but a tiny part of it. When we visited Bolivia, Senator REID, I believe, asked the question: What is the presence of Cuba in Bolivia? The answer is an important one for us to reflect on. Today, out of about 20,000 medical doctors in Bolivia, 1,500 come from Cuba, another 5,000 classroom teachers come from Cuba. When we asked, in Bolivia, our Ambassador what are we doing, he said the United States is making substantial investments in infrastructure. Stop for a moment and think about it. Which version of the world, which message, will have more impact: A message delivered to a person in Bolivia in a clinic or a classroom or a message delivered on a sign next to a stretch of concrete? Not to diminish the importance of infrastructure, but the fact is those Ambassadors of Mr. Castro's view of the world are going to have an impact on the people they help far beyond what impact we will have by building this infrastructure.

Senator REID makes it a point on his trips and I make it a point on mine to meet with Peace Corps volunteers. We had great meetings in Ecuador. Some of these great American kids—I shouldn't call them kids; young men and women, some not so young—who are Peace Corps volunteers literally spent over 12 hours on an overnight bus to make it to a luncheon. We had a great time. We talked. I had a chance to meet a couple of them from the State of Illinois. Andrew Wiemers from Galesburg was one of them. We talked about the challenges we faced, and we talked about how proud we were that they were, for little or no money, giving 2 years of their lives to tell the American story by giving, by helping. They are making a difference. But around the world, there are only 7,000 Peace Corps volunteers. I think we can do more, and I think we need to do better. We can stretch ourselves and stretch our message out to parts of the world that have the wrong message of the United States.

When John Kennedy was President, he took a hard look at Central and

South America for the first time, understanding that in the history of that region, many times our Government and private interests in the United States have exploited it. He created a new opportunity. He called it the Alliance For Progress. And President Kennedy's name is sacred now in this part of the world because of his recognition that they were not just our neighbors but our friends and potential allies.

We have to renew that conversation. It starts with official trips such as these. It starts when we bring our message back to the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. But it can't end there. We have to make sure the legislation we consider, the policies of this country, and our relationships continue to grow.

I will say to those who criticize the official trips by Members of Congress, they don't understand the world in which we live. We have a special responsibility to learn about this world, to tell our message to people around the world and come back with our knowledge and share it with our colleagues. It is important for us as Members of Congress to spend time together in these settings. It builds friendships and alliances and relationships that on the floor of the Senate I have already seen in a few short weeks have paid off. That level of comity, that level of dialog, leads to a more civilized Senate and a better work product at the end of the day.

I thank Senator REID for inviting me to be part of this trip, and I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Madam President, how much time does the majority leader have in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority has 5½ minutes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask that the time of the minority be extended. I will complete my remarks, if not in 5 minutes, shortly thereafter. But whatever time I expend, I ask that time be given to Republicans so they have a matching amount of time.

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, I so appreciate the statements of my colleagues who traveled with me to South America. As has been indicated, Bolivia, if not the poorest country in this hemisphere, is the second poorest. You land in an airport, the highest airport in the world—13,400 feet. As my distinguished friend, the Senator from Utah, said, President Nixon said that people should travel, Members of Congress. I use as an example Ronald Reagan. Ronald Reagan was an anti-Communist, and that is an understatement, but Ronald Reagan always spoke to his enemies. But for Ronald Reagan's insistence that there be bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union on a constant, frequent basis, I am not sure the Cold War would have ended. Not only did he personally meet with the Soviet leaders time after time, people working

in his State Department were in constant contact with the Soviet Union.

Members of Congress should travel. There is no better example than these three countries to which we traveled. They are begging for the attention of the United States, and they are getting no attention. They are not begging for the attention of Venezuela and Cuba, but they are getting lots of attention. As a result of that, they have a significant amount of influence where the United States should be the one exerting the influence.

They want us to be involved. We should be involved. Ninety percent of the cocaine in the world comes from the Andean region. Shouldn't we be involved? But we are not. We set up programs to help them fight the illicit growing and production and transmission of illegal narcotics—and we are cutting back on those moneys. They are limited amounts, anyway. These little democracies cannot afford to do this on their own. It is unpopular for them to do that. The President of Bolivia was the head of a union of coca farmers. He wants to fight the illicit drug trafficking, but he needs our help, as does the President of Ecuador. The most biodiverse nation in the world is Ecuador.

The President of Peru loves America. He was effusive in his praise for America. Why can't we help more?

I wish to mention a couple of things. First of all, the hidden heroes of our Government are our Foreign Service officers. I have been in Congress now going on 25 years. My first tour of duty was in the House of Representatives. I was a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and learned to travel at that time, and rightfully so. I traveled with great chairmen, such as Clem Zablocki from Wisconsin and Dante Fascell from Florida.

I have come to learn that our diplomats, our Foreign Service officers, are the cream of the crop. To become a Foreign Service officer, you have to be very smart and very interested in what goes on in the world. They are the best. They are wonderful people. Every place I go when I travel, I tell these Foreign Service officers something they don't hear very often: They are the difference between America having relations with these countries and not having them.

Ambassadors to these three countries are great human beings. Philip Goldberg in Bolivia—what a tremendous job he is doing, working day and night to improve relations between our country and Bolivia. In Ecuador is a distinguished woman who has a great diplomatic career. She has a smile that is contagious—Linda Jewell. She is doing great work for us in Ecuador; and in Peru, James Curtis Struble, a real professional. I have so much warmth for the work these people do. They go to the remote parts of the world. Every time I meet an ambassador, I say: Where have you been? And you should hear where they have been—the most

remote places in the world, starting off as a political officer, economic officer, places where they handle visas, and they work their way up through the ranks. These Ambassadors are similar to a four-star general. I think we only have 140 Ambassadors, and they are the best, the cream of the crop. If you see a person who has been appointed Ambassador through the career State Department offices, they are the best. They are all Americans. They are generals; they are admirals. I so admire the work they do.

Then, as Senator DURBIN mentioned, every place I go, I talk to the Peace Corps volunteers. We only have, in the world, a little over 7,000 of them. We should have 70,000 Peace Corps volunteers. A woman from Reno, NV, traveled 20 hours to meet me in Ecuador, to have lunch with me in Ecuador. This is her tour of duty as a Peace Corps volunteer. One Peace Corps volunteer from Nevada has a master's degree in biology. She works in public health. Another Foreign Service officer from Nevada works with troubled youth. She showed me her pictures. Her father came to visit her. He lives in New York. He came to see her and where she lives, and when he saw her, he started crying. He said: I expected more than this for my daughter. After he left, after visiting his daughter, he cried with joy, recognizing what this woman does for mankind. That is what Peace Corps volunteers do.

This was a wonderful trip. We need to compete with Cuba and Venezuela in this part of the world and other parts of the world or we are going to lose these democracies.

I have to be very candid with you, Madam President. The snide remarks, the cute little things people write in newspapers about trips taken by Members of Congress, I resent them, and I think it does the American public a disservice. I am going to continue to travel in spite of what the newspapers say because I believe I am serving my country by doing that.

With America's attention focused on the Middle East, South America does not get the attention that it deserves, particularly the three countries we visited—Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru.

And when the world does focus on South America, it is with increased concern over the region's leftward turn, and the inflammatory rhetoric issued by several of the region's leaders criticizing our Government.

There is no doubt that there are serious problems in the region. There is also no question that the Bush administration has neglected the region, and its lack of a comprehensive policy has contributed to this current trend.

Venezuela and Cuba have been filling a vacuum, attempting to pull the region to the left.

But I do not think we should be deterred by this trend. We have much to gain through increased engagement with South America—and much to lose if we retreat from our obligations to the region. We can and must do more.

On our trip, we had productive meetings with the leaders of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. Most importantly, we came away from our visit with an appreciation for the people of these three important nations, and an awareness of the key issues confronting them.

Our first stop was Bolivia, where we had an amicable discussion with President Evo Morales. Much has been said about the somewhat difficult relationship the United States has encountered with President Morales, but we were able to set forth our concerns about increased coca production, the rule of law, and the periodic expressions of anti-Americanism. President Morales also laid out each of his grievances about the U.S. We did not always agree, but we had a very honest and open exchange, and that is what close relationships require.

I was also pleased to see the devoted engagement of our Ambassador Philip Goldberg and his diplomatic team in La Paz. Their insight will be particularly crucial in monitoring the current Bolivian constitutional crisis. We will have to watch these developments closely. We truly hope that whatever happens, Bolivian democracy and Bolivian democratic institutions are strengthened, not weakened. That would be the right result for Bolivia, for the region, and for the relationship with the United States.

Then it was on to Ecuador, the most bio-diverse country in the world. From its snow capped peaks, to the Galapagos Islands, to the Amazon Rain Forest—Ecuador is an environmental treasure. My son spent 2 years there years ago, and to this day, still speaks of his days in Ecuador. After being there, I can understand why Ecuador made such an impact on him.

We were pleased that, although he had not even been sworn in yet, President Correa assembled his new cabinet to meet with our delegation. He seemed quite aware that Ecuador risks becoming a transit hub for narco-trafficking in the region, and vowed to take swift action to shut down the trafficking in and around Ecuador.

Ecuador is the home of the U.S. Forward Operating Location at Manta, which plays a key role in the multilateral approach to fighting the war on drugs. The mission at Manta advances the joint interest that the United States and Ecuador have in curbing the illegal flow of drugs. The American presence at Manta also contributes around \$6.5 million a year to the local economy. We hope that this can be the start of a constructive dialogue on this issue, through which the Ecuadorian Government will come to realize the benefits yielded from the Forward Operating Location at Manta.

Peru, our final stop, must also contend with the problem of drug trafficking. But Peru's President, Alan Garcia, is a leader committed to meeting this challenge. We had such a good meeting with President Garcia, a pro-democracy, pro-capitalist and pro-

American leader. I am very grateful for the graciousness he showed to our delegation.

President Garcia possesses a keen understanding of the dynamic of the region today, and desires to work together to combat the leftist ideology being promoted by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Cuba's Fidel Castro. He noted that, with Castro's possible passing, the U.S. has an opportunity to re-engage in the region, and reach out to a new generation looking at the United States as a model for freedom, democracy and opportunity.

Going forward, we must remember that the U.S. and South America will continue to have its ups and downs. But all relationships do. The six of us took this trip because we know that existing relationships must be cultivated and tended to in order to keep them healthy and strong.

There is so much more we can do here at home. Our delegation intends to meet with the Secretary of State in the coming weeks to relay to her the small things the U.S. Government do to improve our position in the region. For example, I believe: we should be doing more with IMET assistance, which in addition to the training program, proves so valuable to developing longstanding relationships between military officers the United States and the IMET beneficiary; we need to increase the USAID budgets for these nations. We learned that Ecuador's aid budget will be cut considerably, from \$35 million to under \$20 million, and I believe that is a mistake. One thing we learned is how far a few U.S. dollars can go; and we also need to do more to support micro-lending and the counter-drug efforts of the Andean region, in order to keep cocaine off the streets of the United States. I was disturbed to learn that the State Department is contemplating significant cuts to the Andean Counter-drug Program. That, too, would be a serious mistake, and I plan on raising the issue with the Secretary of State.

Finally, I think it is important to extend the trade preferences for Ecuador and Bolivia. I also know that Peru is eager to get its Free Trade Agreement finalized, and this is something that Congress needs to address in the coming year.

Through increased trade, more robust aid and exchange programs, and stronger diplomacy to this region, the United States can help lift many people out of poverty, improve economic conditions, which would have a significant impact on illegal immigration to the United States. We would also help counteract the region's shift to the left. In short, the people of this region want stronger ties with the United States, and that is what we should aim to deliver.

The Andean region is not lost to us; its challenges provide us with an opportunity which we must seize. With more sustained engagement, we can win it back again.

I thank my colleagues for joining me on the floor to talk about this important issue today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I assume this starts this side's period of morning business, to be extended to what time?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority has 62 minutes.

ENERGY

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I come to the Chamber today to speak about efforts that are now underway in the 110th Congress to deal with an issue the American people have become tremendously sensitized to over the last couple of years—the issue of energy, the availability of energy, and the cost of energy. I believe it is important, as we look at cost and America's reaction to it, to recognize that while Americans are paying a higher price for energy today, there has never yet been a question about the availability of energy and the supply itself. I think we forget that when we paid, in midsummer, \$3 at the gas pump for gas and substantially more for diesel, it was always there, it was always available, and that never became the issue.

What I believe is important for us today, in the new Congress, under new leadership in the House and the Senate, is to not only focus on the availability of energy but also move ourselves toward being a nation that becomes independent in its ability to produce its own energy—all kinds, in all ways—for the American consumer.

I find it fascinating that somehow, in the midst of all of this, we have forgotten that while the energy is still at the pump, the lights still come on when we throw the switch in our house in the morning, and America is awash in the use of energy, we have become increasingly dependent on foreign sources for a substantial portion of the very energy that moves this country. Here is a chart which I think demonstrates that. Today, arguably, we have become 60 percent dependent upon someone else producing our hydrocarbons—our oil to produce our gas and our diesel and, of course, the plastics our country uses as a derivative of that.

In this new Congress, we should focus as aggressively as we did in the last Congress in the creation of the National Energy Policy Act of 2005. We ought to now move a major step forward toward energy independence by not only encouraging the increased production of all forms of energy but looking to see if Government stands in the way of that. Is Government promoting it or are we inhibiting it and forcing those who supply our energy to progressively seek offshore sources of that supply?

The new Committee on Energy and Natural Resources that I serve on, under the guidance of JEFF BINGAMAN,

recently held a hearing on who supplies the oil for the world. Is it ExxonMobil? No. Is it Conoco? No. Is it Phillips? No, even though we think it is because that is where we get our fuel when we go to the gas pump. What we found out and what many have known is that 80 percent of the world's oil supplies are controlled by governments. And they are not our Government. They are controlled by government or government-owned companies.

I recently gave a speech to a group of oil producers. I talked about petro nationalism and a growing concern in this country that the world that supplies this portion of our oil can use their political muscle but, more importantly, the valve on the pipeline of the oil supply, to determine the kind of politics and international relations they want to have with us, knowing how we have become so dependent upon that supply.

I hope we continue to focus on supply and availability instead of doing what some are saying we are going to do. We are going to punish the oil companies because they are making too much money. We are going to tax them, and we are going to tax the consumer because somehow that will produce more oil? No, no, no. That is politics, folks. That is, plain and simply, big-time politics, to show the consumer you are macho, that somehow you will knock down the big boys who supply the oil.

Ask the questions, if you are a consumer: Will that keep oil at the pump? Will that keep gas available to me? Will that produce more gas to bring down the price? Those are the legitimate questions that ought to be answered when the leadership of the new Senate says: No, we will muscle up to the big boys and knock 'em down because somehow they may be price gouging. Yet investigation after investigation after investigation suggests that is quite the opposite. That simply is not happening.

Nowhere are they going to tell you in all of this political rhetoric that I would hope would take us toward energy independence and a greater sense of energy security in our country that the new deep wells we are drilling in the gulf that produce or new oil supply could cost upward of \$1 billion a well in actual expenses before the oil begins to flow out of that well and into the ships or into the pipelines that take it to the refineries that ultimately put it in the pipeline that get it to the consumers' pumps. And the issue goes on and on.

I hope that in this Congress, while some will want to play politics, a good many will focus on the reality not only of what we have done, which has been very successful in the last few years—and that is the Energy Policy Act of 2005—but go on with the business of setting goals and driving incentives that move us to energy independence. It is phenomenally important we do that as a country. Long-term investment, new technologies, clean sources of energy are going to become increasingly important.

But more important is that we can stand as a Nation and say we are independent of the political pressures of the Middle East or the political pressures of Venezuela or the political pressures of Central Europe and Russia, that now control the world's supply of oil. That is what Americans ought to be asking our Congress at this time. Are you going to ensure an increased supply? Are you going to ensure a greater sense of independence by the reality of where our oil comes from?

This is not just an issue of oil. We know it is an issue of new technology. It is an issue of cleanness. It is an issue of nonemitting greenhouse gas sources of energy because today we are all about clean energy. And we ought to be. Yet we understand the agenda for climate change is going to be a punitive one, one that would obviously distort a market's growth toward cleaner supplies. It is called cap and trade or command and control instead of saying, yes, that is the old technology. Now let's invest in new technologies. Instead of penalizing, let's create the incentives that move toward new technologies and let us then lay down the old. That is how we cause America to become increasingly energy independent. I am talking climate change.

The Speaker of the House yesterday did something very fascinating. She couldn't get the climate change she wanted out of her own committee so she has created a new select committee on climate change to be headed up by Representative ED MARKEY. I remember Representative MARKEY over the years: All antinuclear, day after day, year after year. He lost that battle. Americans said: You are not going to go there anymore. You are going to start producing energy because it is clean. Now he has been assigned a select committee on climate change.

Congressman DINGELL, who chairs the appropriate committee, said select committees are about as useful as feathers on a fish. Congressman DINGELL gets it right.

What is useful, what is important in the argument of climate change, is new technology, it is incentives, it is producing energy in today's market that is, by any dimension, cleaner than what we produced in the past. You do not penalize the producer, you incentivize the producer to make sure that they move in the direction of clean energy. When you do that, you also say, as we said in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, and as we sought to say again and again and again to the consumer, we are going to provide you with the tools to conserve, to become more efficient in your use of energy.

All of those things, in combination over the next 10 to 15 years, clearly ought to allow this country to stand up and say we have narrowed this gap; we are more independent as a Nation today in our supply of energy than we were in 2007, and we are more independent because our Government stood up, got out of the way, incentivized,