

colleague from Missouri is anxious to catch his plane also.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, if I could impose and ask for 2 minutes, so that Senator CRAIG and myself will consume a total of 5 minutes on this side.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I am so honored to be on the floor with Senator JOE LIEBERMAN today and listen to his remarks, and frankly, to stand in the shadow of his leadership on this issue. Because he has been that, a bipartisan leader recognizing, as he so appropriately has spoke, the leadership role that a Congress should take at this time in our Nation's history. And he has said it well, it is not one of micro-management, it is not 1 of 535 generals all thinking we can act strategically and tactically about the engagement currently underway in Baghdad and elsewhere across Iraq.

It is our job, I would hope, to stand united in behalf of the men and women we send there in uniform to accomplish what we so hope and wish they will be able to accomplish and that is the stability of Iraq and the greater Middle East and allowing the Iraqi people to lead their country and remove from it the kind of radical Islamic fascism that is well underway and dominating the region.

Let me make a few comments this afternoon that clearly coincide with what Senator LIEBERMAN spoke to. This is not, nor should it ever become, a partisan issue and I think Senator LIEBERMAN's presence on the floor this afternoon speaks volumes to just that, that this is not a partisan issue. This is a phenomenally important national and international issue for our country to be engaged in. Frankly, few countries can engage in this struggle in that way we have, and with the kind of energy and strength that we have brought to it.

The majority leader has put us in a very precarious situation, one that is clearly divisive. Frankly, I can say things as a Republican that maybe my colleague cannot say. I believe that the majority leader is playing politics on the issue of calling up a nonbinding resolution, while blocking the minority from calling up a different resolution. My good friend Senator GREGG has introduced a bill, a bill that I have cosponsored, that would express our full support for our soldiers in harms way and give them a much needed guarantee that they will continue to receive the funding they need to continue to function in their critical mission. As I said, the majority leader refuses to allow us a vote on this bill, and I think that is plain wrong.

Let me make it very clear, it is not the Republicans stalling or shutting down debate on the issue of Iraq. In fact, it is just the opposite. I have spoken twice in the last 2 weeks about this issue because I believe it is very critical, both to my constituency in

Idaho, but also to our great Nation and the world. The majority claims that they want full and fair debate on this issue, yet they refuse to allow us to bring our own voice to this issue, and our own resolutions. How can we have a full and fair debate and vote on the floor of the Senate if we are being held hostage by the majority leader?

No State goes untouched by what we do here today and no man or woman in uniform goes untouched. Twenty Idahoans have given their lives in Iraq, and each of their sacrifices is sacred and honored, not just by their families and friend but by all. Most recently, SPC Ross Clevenger and PVT Raymond Werner of Boise, and SGT James Holtom of Rexberg were killed in Iraq in an IED attack. They, like all those who have fallen to enemy hands, served in a heroic and gallant way for a cause they believed in and a cause that we believe in. That is the cause of freedom.

Senator LIEBERMAN said it well, for us to send one of our top generals and top military minds in GEN David Petraeus to Iraq and say by a unanimous vote that we support him and believe in his abilities, but at the same time we do not support his mission, what are we saying as a Congress? What kind of message are we sending to our men and women in uniform when we speak in that manner? I think it is wrong to send this message and I will vigorously oppose that message.

If the majority leader and his Democratic colleagues believe so strongly that our mission in Iraq is so flawed, then why do we not see them bringing to the floor a bill to cut off funding for our troops on the ground in Iraq? As I mentioned earlier, the answer to that is a political answer, not a substance issue. Many Democrats have already called for cutting off funding and demanding an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, yet we have not seen those bills being taken up on the floor of either chamber. However, there are rumors that Members will choose to use the upcoming Iraq supplemental funding bill to force the President to take the advice of these congressional generals, rather than using the advice of our military experts and commanders to execute our mission and secure Iraq.

The reason I do not support such an immediate withdrawal of our troops, or cutting funding off for our troops in gun fights right now in the streets of Baghdad, is simple. I believe in our mission and I believe that our soldiers are the most capable in the world. The only enemy that can defeat American soldiers on the battlefield is the low morale of the American people. A resolution condemning their actions and their mission in Iraq is just the kind of defeat that could embolden our enemies and harm our soldiers.

As every one of my colleagues knows, the reinforcements we are debating are already in motion. In fact, the President's plan to stabilize Baghdad and Anbar Province are already showing

signs of success. The Iraqi government is closing down their borders with Syria and Iran, a critical decision that will limit the number of foreign fighters and enemy weapons from entering Iraq, weapons that are being used to kill American soldiers.

Lastly, I would say that our presence in Iraq does not just affect Iraq. The greater Middle East and the security of world are at stake. Are we going to turn a blind eye to Iraq and allow it to become a safe haven for terrorists the way that Afghanistan was under the Taliban regime? I certainly will do all that I can as a U.S. Senator to prevent that from happening because it is in our national interests to defeat our enemies abroad before they can strike us again here at home.

RURAL SCHOOL FUNDING

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me speak to you briefly regarding another critical issue and that is the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Reauthorization Act.

When we return after our Presidents Day recess, it is vital we re-engage in a critical issue for timber dependent school districts in Idaho and across our country. This bill once referred to as Craig/Wyden, helped many rural school districts move through a difficult time in their history and school children now find themselves in a very difficult situation. As you may know, many rural schools in this country have funding tied directly to timber harvest from our public lands. For several reasons, we haven't harvested timber at our historical rate and our rural schools in those particular counties have suffered.

I am working in a bipartisan way with my colleagues from Montana, Oregon, Washington, California, New Mexico and of course Idaho. We all see the importance of continuing this funding to some extent. I am committed, as is Senator WYDEN, to ensuring the success of the bill that bears our name.

It is my intent, as well as others, to redefine the formula. Our key dates to shape this critical issue are the Energy and Natural Resources hearing scheduled for March 1; as well as the emergency appropriations supplemental debate tentatively scheduled for the middle of March.

The timing is at a critical point. Our timber-dependent county officials and school districts are wrestling with budgets that are tied to this funding. I say today, clearly, failure is not an option.

I yield the floor.

IRANIAN WEAPONS AND IRAQ RESOLUTIONS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Senator BOND.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Virginia, truly a Virginia gentlemen and a good friend and a leader. I am most grateful.

I join with my colleague from Idaho in saying Senator LIEBERMAN's statement is one of a true statesman, one we all ought to take to heart. I commend it and I will make that required reading for anybody who asks about this issue.

Three quick points. I was asked yesterday by the media why the drumbeat on Iran. Simple answer: Iran is providing the EFPs, the explosively formed penetrators that are killing more and more Americans. We have tried, by diplomatic pressure, to get Iran to stop. Now we have even caught a leader of the Quds Force, the Iranian elite special forces unit, that reports directly to the ayatollah. They are there. The Iranians' special forces are there.

Some say, well, maybe the top leaders don't know. But how many folks believe your special forces are going to go someplace, have the devices that only Iran can make, and the top leaders not know anything about it? That is why the drumbeat on Iran. We ought to take out the Iranian fighters and stop the weapons coming in.

Secondly, on this resolution, it not only downgrades General Petraeus and says that although we confirmed you unanimously, we don't believe in your mission, but it also says to our allies, the neighboring countries that have been brought in on this new strategy—a new strategy that General Petraeus is implementing—that they shouldn't bother to come in and help us stop the deterioration in Iraq, which could lead to chaos and a takeover, and it also says to the enemy we are not going to be there.

I am taking an intel trip and will not be here for the vote. I am strongly opposed to cloture on this. So by being absent, I will deny those seeking the 60 votes my vote, and I strongly urge my colleagues who are here to vote no.

IRAQ

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise to address the issue of the Iraq resolutions.

Tomorrow at 1:45, I will vote for cloture, and I do that for reasons that I will set forth. I, like many of us, have to leave early this afternoon. I have consolidated all my State obligations and speeches between now and late tonight so I may return for the vote.

I want to go back and retrace the history of this debate. When I returned from Iraq, with several other Senators, and Senator LEVIN with me, at that time I was chairman of the Armed Services Committee and he was ranking. I indicated to the Nation by way of a press conference that I felt the situation was going sideways; that our strategy was not working.

Initially, in the days following that, I was highly criticized for those remarks. Eventually, however, others began to recognize the situation as I had, and, indeed, the President, when he was asked publicly if he supported

the observations that I had made, said yes. I commend the President for immediately swinging into full gear his whole administration to study intensively the matters with regard to the current strategy. It included work by the Baker-Hamilton group, which I think played a very constructive role.

In the resolution which I prepared, with the assistance of Senator BEN NELSON and Senator COLLINS, we make direct reference to that. I bring up that background because the President then, on January 10, announced his intention to go forward with a changed strategy. The President, in that speech, specifically said:

If Members have improvements that can be made—I repeat—if Members have improvements that can be made, we will make them. If circumstances change, we will adjust.

Now, that was an open invitation to Members of Congress and others to address this very important plan laid down by the President. Our group, my 2 colleagues who worked with me, Senator LEVIN joining us later, and a half dozen others, some 8 or 10, up almost to 12, joined in an honest forthright way in accepting the President's offer. That is how this started. In drawing up our resolution, we were careful to say, yes, we had different views, but we urged the President to consider all options—I repeat all options—other than the utilization of 21,500 individuals to go into that situation.

Specifically, our resolution charges the Iraqi military with taking the lead, with taking the brunt. I reiterate, the Iraqis should be taking the full measure of responsibility for this Baghdad campaign. Therein rests this Senator's primary concern with the President's plan. I say that because our American GIs have fought bravely, courageously, and we have had sacrifice and loss of life and limb, and in no way have they failed in the attempt to try to help the Iraqi people achieve their freedom, achieve their Government through elections, and to become a sovereign Nation. Now it should fall upon the over 300,000 Iraqi troops, police, and other security officials to bring about the cessation of this violence in Baghdad.

The Iraqis are far better qualified by virtue of their understanding of the language. They have a far better understanding of what is it that is bringing about this sectarian violence. These are the very people we liberated and gave them back their sovereign land and who are now fighting themselves, Sunni upon Shia, Shia upon Sunni, with wanton murder and criminal activity. Our forces do not understand the language. It is hard for those here in this Chamber to go back and look at the origins of the difference between the Sunni and Shia, which go back some 1,400 years. Our troops shouldn't be in there trying to decide do we shoot at a Sunni or do we shoot at a Shia. That should be the responsibility of the Iraqi forces. That is the principal reason I found differences with the President.

Our leaders, the RECORD will reflect, have tried to reconcile the differences between our two sides. The last time I didn't support cloture. I did that to support the institution of the Senate, because this Senate stands apart from the House, and stands apart from legislatures all over the world because of the right and the freedom to debate and for all to bring forth their ideas. We are behind that now. So far as I know, the leaders have done their best and we were not able to achieve agreement, and now, procedurally, we are faced with the situation of a House resolution, which will be voted on in an hour or more, and will then be considered by the Senate. For that purpose, I will vote cloture.

We supported the President in our resolution. As I read the House resolution, it does not reject the President's initiative to have a diplomatic component to his plan. The House resolution does not reject the economic aspect of what the President puts in his plan. So I say to my colleagues that what comes before us does not reject outright the President's program. It directs itself to that military operation, much as we did in S. Con. Res. 7, and says respectfully that we urge the President to consider all options, options that were set forth in testimony before the Armed Services Committee by General Abizaid, when he said we don't need any more troops; by General Casey, when he was up for confirmation and he said he thought we only needed two brigades, not five brigades.

So it is against that background that I think our group has come forth in response to the President's invitation and stated our case in a very respectful way. This matter we will address, the House resolution, I do not believe rejects the entire plan of the President. The components of diplomacy and the components of economics are there. It is only the question of how we employ our forces. I say the burden falls on the Iraqi security forces.

I will submit for the RECORD a New York Times story which appeared this week outlining an operation in which we had 2,500 Americans and less than 100 Iraqi forces turned up to participate. I asked about this yesterday when questioning the Chief of Staff of the United States Army and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, as to what their idea of the plan had been, and it was represented to us that there were to be joint forces, a joint command.

Certainly this is an early report, and I cannot speak to the authenticity of the article, but I have invited the Department of Defense to comment on it. It indicates to me that the Americans are bearing the brunt, not the Iraqi forces.

I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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