

missed today as we look back on the tragic way the Vietnam war ended. A 1972 Harris poll showed even 8 years after we began our involvement in Vietnam, the American people agreed by a margin of 74 percent to 11 percent that it was important that South Vietnam not fall into the hands of the Communists. We rarely hear those statistics today. We rarely hear that viewpoint.

I stand here as someone who still today supports our national objectives in Vietnam and who was an early warning voice with respect to the strategic inadvisability of going into Iraq. On this special day of remembrance for so many Vietnamese around the world, I wish to give a salute, first, to our Vietnam veterans who fought with such great honor, whose sacrifices are rarely remembered in an affirmative sense. We saw 58,000 Americans die on the battlefields of Vietnam and more than 300,000 wounded; 3 million people served.

I also wish to thank the veterans of the South Vietnamese Army who also are so frequently wrongly portrayed in history. They fought alongside us. Many of them fought very well. As I mentioned earlier, 245,000 of them died in the battlefield and many more went through struggles after the war that are very difficult for Americans to digest. Imagine being in a reeducation camp for 13½ years, where you are allowed to see your family for 15 minutes a year. Imagine not having veterans status, either in Vietnam or in the United States, after having gone through, in some cases, 12 years on a battlefield.

I wish to thank those Vietnamese, the truly forgotten warriors who stood alongside us on the battlefield. I also wish to express my pride and appreciation to the Vietnamese who came to this country and showed us the strength of their culture, showed us what could have happened if South Vietnam had remained free. We now have 2 million Vietnamese Americans living in this country and they have done enormously well.

With respect to the Hanoi Government—I have been dealing with the Hanoi Government since 1991 when I first returned to Vietnam. I have made many trips back to Vietnam in many different capacities. They have made significant strides since those early days when they essentially were a Stalinist system. There is a lot to be proud of in terms of the transformations that have been going on in Vietnam. Vietnam is growing. It is growing economically. We have much work to do. We have much work to do in terms of encouraging that political system to open up, to allow religious freedom, to allow greater political freedom. We are on a pathway where, with the right kind of dialog, I believe that is going to occur.

I think the best legacy for us to have when we look back at that era would be to see Vietnam, the Vietnam of today, as a strategic and commercial

partner but also as a vibrant, open society whose Government reflects the strength of the culture itself, a strength that has been demonstrated over and over again by the Vietnamese who have come to this country and who, I am proud to say, are now Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I come to the floor of the Senate today where there is an opportunity for a historic moment. We have passed, despite critics who doubted it, a bill which is being sent to the President tomorrow. This bill is the supplemental appropriations bill for the war in Iraq. It is the seventh supplemental bill the President has asked for. These bills by their nature are supposed to be unexpected appropriations bills for unanticipated disasters and emergencies.

President Bush has decided to fund this war with these so-called emergency appropriations bills. It is hard to argue, in the fifth year of this war, that it is unanticipated that our troops need help. They are going to continue to need help as long as the President keeps them in Iraq and in the fight.

The President has already signaled his punch. We know what he is going to do with this bill. He said he is going to veto this bill. This will be the second veto in the 6 years or more that George W. Bush has served as President. Only twice will he have used his veto pen. The first was to stop a bill for stem cell research, a bill that had passed the House and the Senate with bipartisan support. I will not go through the litany of Republicans and Democrats who supported it. I was one. We sent it to the President urging him to reconsider his position that we ought to cut off medical research if it meant using embryonic stem cells, that it was better to use them for research than to have them discarded, thrown away. Use them for the valuable pursuit of cures for illnesses and diseases so that people suffering from diabetes, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, spinal cord injury, so many other different diseases, heart disease, for example, that they would have a chance with this research.

The President said, no, used his veto pen for the very first time and stopped that bill to continue to stop Federal funding of that research. I think the President was wrong and I believe others believe that as well.

Now we have a bill that is also about life and death. This is a bill about war. What we have said to the President is: We will give you money to sustain our troops in battle. In fact, we will give you more than you asked for our troops, but we want you to understand, as most Americans do, that we need a plan to bring our troops home.

The idea of funding this war indefinitely and watching it continue day by

weary day, month by bloody month, is unacceptable to the majority of Americans, unacceptable to the majority of the Members of the House and Senate.

When we started down this path just a few weeks ago, there were some who doubted that we would be able to find enough Democrats and Republicans to pass an alternative, a timetable for re-deployment of our troops. But we did. Despite the fact that there were 50 Democrats and 49 Republicans, that one of the Senators in our ranks voted with the other side of the aisle, we have been able to find at least two Republican Senators who will stand with us for the argument that it is time for American troops to start coming home.

But the President has said he is going to veto this bill. It will be ironic if he vetoes it tomorrow because, you see, tomorrow is the fourth anniversary of the President's announcement that our mission had been accomplished in Iraq, 4 years ago today we were told.

We have had 3,351 killed in Iraq, 3,351 soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen. I called many of the families who have lost someone, dropped a note to others, attended a few funerals along the way when my schedule allowed. It is a heart-sickening feeling for a father like myself to walk into a funeral of a young man, 19, 20, 21 years of age, to watch parents with the pride, of course, in the service of their son or daughter, but the realization that they are gone, and what it means for the rest of their life. Madam President, 3,351 funerals. Maybe we don't realize that number because this administration has carefully avoided scenes where we would be reminded. They would not allow us to film the return of flag-draped caskets. What an irony that in the United Kingdom the flag-draped caskets have become the center of a national observance, the center of national respect as people pour out to show how much they cared for that fallen soldier. But in America it is kept quiet, but not quiet enough, because we know what is happening. We know what is happening to our country, and we know it has to change.

Madam President, today the former Director of the CIA, George Tenet, has published his book, "At the Center of the Storm." I worked with Mr. Tenet for 4 years as a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. There were times when I was inspired by his public face and times when I was angry at some of the things he did or said or failed to do. He was, indeed, a public servant, and one with a long career. In the preface to this book, which talks about the war in Iraq in many parts, we have a section which I would like to read into the RECORD. It is an important section for all of us to reflect upon.

George Tenet speaks about the day after 9/11. Imagine, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency. America has been attacked for the first time since the British in the War of 1812. More

than 3,000 innocent Americans died. The Nation is in turmoil, fear, and anger over what has occurred, and you are the person responsible for gathering the intelligence to find out who did it and how to stop them from ever doing it again.

He talks about the morning after, Wednesday, September 12, dawned as the first full day of a world gone mad. Nothing would ever be the same: Early that morning, operating on only a few hours' sleep, I headed out of my front door to the armored Ford Expedition that was waiting to carry me to see the President of the United States.

He talks about his journey to the White House early on the morning of Wednesday, September 12. This is the part I think is important to note.

George Tenet writes:

All this weighed heavily on my mind as I walked beneath the awning that leads to the West Wing and saw Richard Perle exiting the building just as I was about to enter. Perle was one of the godfathers of the neoconservative movement, and at that time he was head of the Defense Policy Board, an independent advisory group to the Secretary of Defense. Ours was little more than a passing acquaintance. As the doors closed behind him, we made eye contact and nodded. I had just reached the door myself when Perle turned to me and said, quote: Iraq has to pay a price for what happened yesterday. They bear responsibility.

Tenet writes:

I was stunned but said nothing. Eighteen hours earlier, I had scanned passenger manifests from the four hijacked airplanes that showed beyond a doubt that al-Qaida was behind the attacks. Over the months and years to follow, we would carefully examine the potential of collaborative roles for state sponsors. The intelligence, then and now, however, showed no evidence of Iraqi complicity.

At the Secret Service security checkpoint, I looked back at Perle and thought: What the hell is he talking about? Moments later a second thought came to me: Who has Richard Perle been meeting with in the White House so early in the morning on today of all days? I never learned the answer to that question.

That is not a surprising story, although it is stunning because we have heard the same. This administration, hours after the attack of 9/11, decided that Iraq had to be our next target. The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, a man privy to all of the classified information, said then and now there was no connection. Yet here we are today, 3,351 fallen soldiers, 25,000 or more seriously injured, 8,000 or 9,000 returning as amputees and victims of traumatic brain injury.

Many of us believe it is time for the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own country. We have spent over 500 billion American dollars in Iraq, not just for our military but for the Iraqi people as well. We have given them our most precious treasure, the lives of our soldiers. We have given them from our Treasury freely in an effort to try to give them a chance to rule their own country.

Their dictator, Saddam Hussein, is gone. They have been given free elec-

tions and an opportunity to write their own constitution. We have waited patiently as they have failed time and time again to meet their own targets for progress.

April 4, a few weeks ago, Leon Panetta, a former Member of the House of Representatives from California, former Chief of Staff to President Bill Clinton, a member of the Iraq Study Group, wrote an article in the New York Times entitled, "What About Those Other Iraq Deadlines?" Everyone should read this because what Mr. Panetta has done is to lay out all of the deadlines which the Iraqis set for themselves, not deadlines we imposed on them but set for themselves, to bring order to their country.

Mr. Panetta shows, time and again, how they have failed. The Iraqis promised to achieve, by the end of 2006 or early 2007, the approval of a provincial election law. So far no progress. Approval of a law to regulate the oil industry and share revenues. While the Council of Ministers has approved a draft, it has yet to be approved by parliament. Approval of the deBaathification laws to reintegrate officials of the former regime and Arab nationalists into public life. No progress. Approval of a law to rein in sectarian militias. No progress. By March, the Government promised to hold a referendum on constitutional amendments. No progress.

By May the Prime Minister committed to putting in place the law controlling militias. No progress. The approval of the amnesty agreement. No progress. The completion of all reconciliation efforts. No progress. The Iraqi Government promised to hold provincial elections. No date has been set. The list goes on and on.

The point I would like to make for the record is that while the Iraqis take their sweet time deciding the tough political decisions that they face to have a stable country, our soldiers die.

Tomorrow, the President is likely to veto our suggestion that our soldiers start coming home. What message will that send the Iraqis? It will send the message it is business as usual: Problems in your country? Dial 9-1-1. Order up 20,000 American soldiers. Political difficulties? Take your time. The Americans are standing guard over your country while your civil strife continues. That is the message of President Bush's veto. It is a message which says to the Iraqis: Continue business as usual.

Many of us on a bipartisan basis in the House and Senate think that is exactly the wrong message. If there is anything Prime Minister Maliki should understand it is that the American people and their representatives in Congress have had enough. It is our belief that the Iraqis need to take responsibility for their own future.

I think we understand, as we listen to these missed deadlines, that these are not just shortcomings but symptoms of a reconciliation within Iraq that may

not be possible. That is a hard thing to say, but it is a conclusion which we have to at least consider.

There was never an exit strategy for this war, a war which was conceived in the hours after the attack of 9/11, and a war which the former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency cannot link to that tragic event. There was never an exit strategy and without setting benchmarks we have given our issue of national security to an Iraqi Government that cannot get it together.

Primary Minister Maliki has fallen in and out of favor with this White House. Stephen Hadley, the President's adviser on issues of national security, at one time had a memo leaked which suggested he was running out of patience. Then the White House said later, that is not the official position. But it is a reality of what we face today, a reality that suggests that Mr. Maliki may not be up to this job.

If the President does not care for our exit strategy to bring American troops home, what is his exit strategy? Is it to stay there indefinitely? To wait, as he has suggested, for another President, 20 months from now, to take up this challenge? Twenty months? Twenty months of losing more soldiers, twenty months of spending \$8 to \$10 billion a month rather than spend it in the United States for our own people, for their security and their prosperity?

What would happen if the President's escalation of this war, which has gone through many different names—surge, augmentation, you name it. What it means is 20,000 to 30,000 more soldiers are put in harm's way. What happens if it is successful and secures Baghdad? Does that mean our soldiers can come home? I don't think so. I am afraid in the President's view of things it is just one step in a long series of steps that continue to require the presence of our troops.

Madam President, last week I came to the floor of the Senate for the ninth time recounting my personal experience in the lead-up to the vote on this war. I talked about the fact that I was a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee when this vote came up.

As a member of the Intelligence Committee, we meet in closed session, no access by the press or public. The room is carefully guarded. It is swept to make sure there are no listening devices. People in our Government come in to brief the Intelligence Committee with the most sensitive, delicate, and important intelligence information. It is an understanding of every member of the committee that, unlike other committees, we are not supposed to talk. What we hear in that room is supposed to stay in that room. I am sure there are breaches from time to time, but conscientious Senators do their best to avoid doing so. We understand that many times that nugget of information, as important as it may be, could involve a human life somewhere, someone who has risked their life to tell us

something important to keep us safe. We have to take that information just that seriously.

In the lead-up to the war in Iraq, we were given these briefings by members of the Bush administration about why they felt we had to invade. I would sit in that room and listen day after day to hours and hours of testimony. What I heard then has now been declassified, so we can speak of it openly, but at the time, we couldn't. It was classified information, top-secret information, not to be disclosed. As I listened to the administration debating one another about whether there was a potential for nuclear weapons or whether there were weapons of mass destruction, it became obvious to me that even within the administration there were serious doubts about some of the things which were being told to the American people. It troubled me. I said as much on the floor last week and say it again this week.

It was interesting, after having said that, one of the more ultraconservative publications, the Washington Times, has been critical of me for not disclosing classified information. Senator NELSON knows what I am talking about. Had I walked out to the microphones and said: The Bush administration is in a battle within its own ranks as to whether this is true, you can imagine the next morning's headline: "Durbin Discloses Classified Information From the Intelligence Committee." I couldn't do it. None of us could from that committee.

I accept the challenge from these ultraconservative publications and some of their blogs. I think I did the only thing I could do. With my conscience and with my own knowledge, I voted against this war, feeling at the time that it was a mistake for us to go forward. I still feel it was a mistake. Now we have to do something to turn that around. We have to start bringing our soldiers home.

I hope that when the President has a chance to veto this bill or sign it tomorrow, he will stop and think for a moment. If he fails to sign this bill, he will, unfortunately, endanger the lives of American soldiers who are wedded to his failed policy in Iraq. These fine men and women in uniform are the very best in America. They are doing their duty. They didn't write this policy. That was written by the Commander in Chief and those who work for him. They will go into battle as instructed and risk their lives day in and day out. But we know, with 3,351 dead and no end in sight, we have to move forward.

When the President vetoes this bill, if he chooses to make that decision, he will be vetoing billions of dollars for National Guard equipment that we added to his request. He will be vetoing billions of dollars for military hospitals so we don't have the scandal we had at Walter Reed a few weeks ago. He will be vetoing billions of dollars for us to put into veterans hospitals to take

care of returning wounded soldiers. He will be vetoing billions of dollars for Hurricane Katrina relief that is long overdue. The President has a chance in signing this bill to not only move us in an orderly manner to bringing American troops home but serving so many other important needs for this country. I hope he won't just instinctively and reflexively veto the bill. I hope he will consider that it is time for change and it is time for a new direction.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I commend my colleague from Illinois for the very cogent and heartfelt plea he has made that this Government function as it should between the three branches and that the appropriations process is one which is joined between the executive branch and the legislative branch. It was never intended to be all one way or not. Yet that is what publicly has been insisted by the White House on this Iraq funding bill. It is expected that the President is going to veto this legislation. Then the question is, Are we going to be able to have a meeting of the minds? Can we have a little bit less partisanship and a lot more, as the Good Book says, come let us reason together? It is my hope that we will see more of that.

EXPANSION OF DRILLING

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I rise to speak to the Senate because there is another thing the executive branch of Government has done today; that is, the Secretary of the Interior has announced a vast new expansion of drilling off of the continental United States. The one area proposed for lease sale for oil and gas production and drilling that is acceptable is the area we negotiated in the legislation we passed last year, which is lease sale 181 in the central Gulf of Mexico and part of the eastern Gulf of Mexico. Members will recall that this has been a 6-year struggle, of which this Senator from Florida actually had to engage in a filibuster in 2005 to protect the interests of my State, as well as the interests of the U.S. military, and finally prevailed in that protection in 2006, when we agreed to an area that could be drilled, but it was kept far from the coast of Florida and away from the military testing and training area, which is the largest testing and training area in the world for our military. Why that? Because where we are testing sophisticated new weapons systems and where there is live ordnance involved covering a vast array of space, you simply cannot have oil rigs on the surface of the water below where all of this testing utilizing new ordnance is going on.

So what the Secretary of the Interior has proposed is some exploration in those areas we approved last year, which was approved with this Senator's consent because we protected the financial, economic interests of Florida,

keeping the oil drilling away from our precious, sugary, white-sand beaches, which spawn a \$52 billion-a-year tourism industry, keeping it away from the bays and estuaries that are so necessary to the ongoing marine life, and at the same time protecting the U.S. military and its interests to have its weapons tested so they are ready to go in case they are needed.

The proposal today also includes other areas off the continental United States; with the concurrence of Virginia, 50 miles off the shore of Virginia. I would think the States of South Carolina and North Carolina ought to have something to say about that. I would think the State of Delaware or the State of New Jersey ought to have something to say about that because the wind and wave action doesn't just keep a potential oil spill right off of Virginia, even if Virginia wanted that drilling 50 miles off of its coast. There is a major tourism industry built on the beauty of those beaches in North Carolina as well as the beaches of Delaware and New Jersey, not to even speak of the beaches of South Carolina.

The other part the Secretary of the Interior is proposing is four different areas off the coast of Alaska. We certainly remember the concerns, which were valid concerns, as a result of the Exxon Valdez disaster decades ago. But my argument against this proposal by the Secretary of the Interior goes far beyond those valid concerns I have just mentioned. It goes to the heart of the matter of national security and protection of the national economy; that is, we have an economy and a defense posture that puts us in the position today of being reliant on foreign oil to the tune of 60 percent of our daily consumption of oil coming from foreign shores in places such as the Persian Gulf region, Nigeria, and Venezuela, three parts of the world that are not necessarily stable and of which Venezuela—you have seen the kind of difficulty we have had with the President of Venezuela, who continues to threaten that he is going to cut off the oil to us and, by the way, that is 12 percent of our daily consumption.

Then someone would say: If that is true, why not drill for more oil?

In the first place, as to this drilling off Alaska, the oil wouldn't be ready for another 10 years. The economic crisis is today. The national security crisis is today. The United States has 3 percent of the world's oil reserves, but the United States consumes 25 percent of the world's oil production. It doesn't take a mathematical genius to figure out that you can't drill your way out of the problem.

That brings me to the crux of my argument. The present policy of the administration is to drill, drill, drill. We simply have to change that policy. We have to go to alternative fuels. We have to go to increased mileage standards on our vehicles; otherwise, we can never get out of this problem of dependence on foreign oil, all the time