

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUNUNU). Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business not to exceed 60 minutes, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee, and the remaining 30 minutes under the control of the Senator from Texas, Mrs. HUTCHISON, or her designee.

The Senator from Florida is recognized.

UNITED STATES MILITARY ROTATION POLICY

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I will address the rotation policy in Iraq of our U.S. military forces, and specifically the National Guard and the Reserves. I will also address the planning of that rotation policy.

Over the weekend, I met with enumerable groups in Florida about their loved ones who are serving overseas. As members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, we addressed this issue with Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Myers, in our committee meeting 2 weeks ago on the plan of rotation and the inequities that are coming out as a result of the lack of planning and how that is being implemented.

Now, I am going to give some specific examples. I might say that this large stack contains all e-mails—and you know how small the type is on e-mails—from family members in my State about the inequity of the situation. These are e-mails that I have received directly from soldiers, primarily members of the Florida National Guard and the Reserves.

As I tried to address what I perceive to be the inequity in this so-called plan as being implemented, as I tried to address it in committee, as I have in private meetings with the brass, and now as I try to discuss these inequities with the Senate, I, first, will say that had the executive branch of Government listened to the bipartisan voices in the Senate Armed Services Committee—and in particular the Senate Foreign Relations Committee where the chairman of that committee, Dick Lugar of Indiana, a Republican, and one of his ranking members, Senator CHUCK HAGEL of Nebraska, a Republican, and another of his high-ranking members, Senator LINCOLN CHAFEE of Rhode Island, a Republican, along with a chorus of voices on the committee, including mine—had they listened about the need for a plan after the military campaign in the postwar occupation of Iraq, then I don't think we would be going through the strains and stresses on this rotation policy. Combatant Com-

mander General Abizaid, who is supplied with Army troops through the Army Chief of Staff, of which they are having to stretch out these deployments of the National Guard and Reserves in Iraq, had they listened—had the executive branch of Government listened that there had to be a plan in place, as we had for Germany and Japan—we had a plan being worked on for 3 years prior to the end of World War II for Germany and Japan—had the plan been in place, we would see that we should not have an American face as occupiers in a Muslim country. Instead, it should be the world community participating in trying to stabilize Iraq politically and economically.

Had a plan been in place, the preparation would have been there to bring in the Iraqi civilians to run the Government so that there is an Iraqi face on the running of the Government. But that plan is not in place and we are seeing the results of the near chaos from time to time and, indeed, the sabotage that is occurring, the deaths that are occurring, and so forth.

But that is an issue for another day. It is a table setter for what I want to talk about—the inequity of the rotation policy and the plan that is specifically being conducted in the rotation of the troops in Iraq.

First, Florida's National Guard is one of the most professional in the Nation. It is well organized, it is well trained, and it is well led. They have proven their dedication to duty in this war, and they have committed to do whatever this Nation asks, and they have done it very well.

A couple of days ago, General Schoemaker, the Chief of Staff of the Army, told me that the soldiers of the Florida National Guard are as good as they come. They are also tired and fatigued.

I raised this rotation policy with the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in that committee meeting a couple weeks ago. I have discussed this rotation policy with the Army Chief of Staff. I will discuss this policy with the Secretary of Defense tomorrow.

Florida National Guard soldiers were among the first Guard units alerted in December. They were brought into the armory the day after Christmas to start preparing all of their equipment, and they were mobilized right after New Year's Day. They were also among the first to enter the theater of operations, beginning in February and flowing quickly through March and early April.

Florida's National Guard soldiers participated throughout the major combat phase of this operation and throughout the breadth and depth of the theater—a theater that we know had no safe rear area, in the traditional sense.

Company C, Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry of the Florida Guard—let me tell you what they did before the war. The war started on

March 19. Charlie Company dug by hand through the berm that marks the Jordanian-Iraqi border, and then they attacked into Iraq in support of the 5th Special Forces Group. They were in Iraq before the war started on March 19. Since then, Charlie Company has been passed around the theater, from command to command, about 10 times, from the 5th Special Forces Group, to Special Operations Headquarters, to the 5th Corps Headquarters, to the 3rd Infantry Division, to the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, and to the 1st Armored Division.

Charlie Company is still there and they have suffered two fatalities—one gunned down at the University of Baghdad the night I was coming into Baghdad in early July, another in a vehicle accident, and a third wounded in the neck. Other companies of the three battalions of the 124th Infantry, of the Florida Guard, have been passed among the headquarters all over the theater no less than 40 times since arriving in the area of operations.

This is not a complaint. This is a statement of fact. Florida is justifiably proud of its contribution to the war on terror. Florida has the third highest number of Guard and Reserve soldiers mobilized and deployed globally in the war on terror, with 6,190 Florida Guard soldiers. Two States are a little higher, California and Texas, and it is only by a few hundred soldiers in each of those States.

Florida has also deployed the second highest number of Guard soldiers to the Iraqi theater. Right now, in the Iraqi area of operations, there are 2,482. We are second highest to Alabama, and Alabama has 38 soldiers more. These two States, Alabama and Florida, by far have the most soldiers deployed to the Iraqi theater.

No State has provided more infantry from the Guard than Florida—1,392 infantry soldiers, followed by Indiana's infantry at 1,286. These two States by far are contributing more to the Iraqi theater from Guard units than are infantry troops.

Naturally, since they were deployed the day after Christmas, they are tired, and I believe they should be replaced by fresh troops as soon as possible.

There is a new policy, and the new policy of the Defense Department is a "12-month Boots on the Ground in Iraq" rotation policy, and it may not be equitably implemented because Florida's Guard entered the theater in company-size elements spread out over a period of 2½ months. So it doesn't sound like it is equitable for this new policy of boots-on-the-ground for the clock to start ticking only when the last unit arrives in theater, what they call over at the Pentagon "closed in command."

I understand that other National Guard units are already beginning the process of coming home, and I am happy for them, and I am happy they are coming back to their loved ones. But I cannot seem to get a clear answer from the Department of Defense

and the Army about who is coming home early and why.

National Guard units that have spent the entire major combat phase outside of Iraq appear to be on the way home. I will give an example.

I had several from the highest echelons of the Department of the Army tell me that another State's National Guard is rotating back—that State's Guard has, in fact, never been in Iraq. In fact, if that information is correct that the other State's Guard is returning in October, then they will have served there 11 months. I am happy for them, but I am questioning the equity of a case where because of a "closed in command" policy, the last unit arriving in the theater starting the clock ticking for 12 months "boots on the ground," that, in effect, is going to extend some of the Florida National Guard a year and a half since they were mobilized and when they went to that headquarters to start packing their gear on December 26.

Then I was told last night by another general in the Pentagon that, no, that particular State was not going home until next January or February. The Department of Defense cannot get the information correct. I have been told three different things about those units. I have been told four different things about the Florida units. So I have had to dig it out for myself by talking to our own Guard members through e-mail and talking with them directly by telephone.

The rotation policy for our Guard and Reserve forces should be simple: Return them to their civilian lives as soon as is militarily practical. This requires detailed and timely planning which does not appear to have been adequate or to have been based on realistic assumptions for operations after the major combat phase. Of course, the major combat phase was brilliant. General Franks will go down in military history as one of the great military leaders of the United States.

Now we are in the phase of the occupation, and our soldiers of the Florida National Guard are proud to soldier on in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Bosnia, as well as at home securing Air Force bases in Florida. But we are on the threshold of a serious problem for our Guard and Reserve servicemembers. Their sacrifices began the moment they were mobilized and left their civilian lives behind. They leave their families, they leave their employers, their livelihoods. Their families' well-being is at risk throughout the deployment regardless of their location or tactical conditions. Guard families in Florida and across the Nation have endured the separation, uncertainty, financial hardship, and fear that goes along with any deployment into harm's way, and that is what they signed up for. They are willing to accept it.

When I talked with these family members, as I did in Orlando last Thursday, in Tampa on Friday, and in

Miami on Monday, they were almost apologetic to me. They said: For me to say anything sounds like I don't want to be patriotic. I am most patriotic, they tell me, and we are so proud of our Guard who are serving. They are pointing out, if others are coming back in less than a year, why are our Florida Guard and Reserves going to be mobilized for up to a year and a half? That is an excellent question.

Let me give some of these family stories. In central Florida in Daytona Beach at the Halifax Medical Center, Kaitlyn Rose Long was born on February 25. Her father was not there. He did not expect to be there because he is a soldier deployed since January. At the time of her birth, he was 7,600 miles away in Qatar.

Kaitlyn's mother thought her husband was coming home soon, particularly because he had suffered a collapsed lung while working guard duty in Balad, an Iraqi city about 50 miles north of Baghdad. He was sent to a hospital in Germany where doctors initially told him he was going to have to go home. They changed their minds, and he is expected back in Balad next week. To family members that is heartbreaking, but they will accept that. What they will not accept is the inequity of treating some one way and others another way.

The husband of another 25-year-old mother of three from Brandon is a specialist in Charlie Company of the 2nd Battalion. As I said earlier, they have shifted to over a half a dozen units during their deployment. In mid-May, the company was told, because they were fatigued from the fog of war, that they were heading home. Instead, they were sent to Baghdad.

Another lady, Ada Dominquez, came from Miami all the way to the Orlando meeting to tell me of her concern about this inequity.

Florida's military families are tough, they are dedicated, and they are loyal Americans, proud of their service. They are willing to continue to make sacrifices to keep this Nation strong and free. They are an inspiration to me. They are an inspiration to all of us. They know this is very tough and complex, and it is still a very dangerous mission.

One soldier's mother from central Florida said to me: Just tell them when they are going to be coming home. Do not keep jerking them around, getting this information; it stops, then it starts, and then it stops. She said that is when the morale sinks to the lowest.

Members of the Guard and the Reserve are also volunteers. As we so often say, we recruit individuals but we re-enlist families. The rotation challenges the Army struggles with now are going to be the result of too few troops for the missions we ask them to do. We need to look seriously at adding more troops to the Active Force.

There have been a number of us who have been trying to urge the Secretary

of Defense to open that issue, and thus far it has not been addressed. We must, as a Nation, figure out how we are going to deal with this challenge, or we are going to risk losing the numbers we need in the finest Guard and Reserve system in world history.

If the demands on our military continue at their current pace and more than 12-month overseas deployments become routine—as some of the Florida troops are facing, up to a year and a half—then our National Guard and Reserve troops are not going to re-enlist when the time comes. Our military force of the Army, which is roughly a half million plus Active, 400,000 plus Reserves, and 300,000 plus Guard; we can see that the Guard and the Reserves are so integrally important to the military force structure. If we do not have what is perceived to be an equitable rotation policy, then when it comes time for them to re-up, many of them will not. That will be devastating from the standpoint of providing for the force structure this Nation is going to need as we face the multitude of places around the world where we will have to go and battle the terrorists. If those ranks are depleted, then we will not have them when we need them the most.

I commend the Guard and the Reserves. They have been one of the finest military fighting outfits that has ever been produced to supplement the regular Active-Duty Army. We can talk about the Air Guard as well, performing services all over this country, including air defense. It is those Guard units, under the command of the general from Tyndall Air Force Base, that if we ever have another airliner hijacked, he has the command responsibility of ordering the shoot-down of that airliner that is taken over by terrorists. The Air Guard is performing that.

The issue in front of us now is the equity of the Guard and the Reserves in the rotation policy. I hope General Schumacher, the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs will listen to these words and will enact a policy of rotation that will be perceived to be equitable for all the Guard units.

Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. President. What is the status of the morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in a period of morning business.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Is the time equally divided?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Equally divided, 30 minutes controlled by the Democratic leader or his designee, and 30 minutes controlled by the Senator from Texas or her designee.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. The Senator from Florida would ask, does that mean the entire first 30 minutes is set aside for this side of the aisle?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. How many minutes remain?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are 4½ minutes remaining controlled by the Democratic leader.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I will make a couple of other comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

THE FEDERAL DEFICIT

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, on a completely different subject, as a Nation, we are recklessly careening down the road toward bankruptcy. In the fiscal year that ends in a week, September 30, we are going to be hemorrhaging in our budget to the tune of \$500 billion. That is a half trillion dollars.

In the new fiscal year that starts October 1, it is estimated we are going to be hemorrhaging to the tune of \$600 billion, well over a half trillion dollars. Just to put it in perspective, in the decade of the 1980s, when we ran up so much of our national debt, the max in any one year in the late 1980s was a deficit of \$280 billion. That means we were spending \$280 billion more than we had coming in in revenue. Therefore, we had to go out and borrow it, and that added to the national debt.

The next fiscal year starts in a few days. We are going to spend more than we have coming in tax revenue to the tune of \$600 billion and we have to borrow it. Now, where do my colleagues think we borrow it from? We borrow it from folks like you and me, when we buy Treasury bills. We borrow it from institutional investors like pension funds. But it will shock people to know that a good bit of the debt that is being acquired, or debt that is being bought—or to put it in the vernacular of the street, the people who we are borrowing from are the Chinese and the Saudis. Does that not portend some uncomfortable things for America to have a good part of its national debt owned by folks who from time to time we have serious policy differences with?

How did we get into this? September 11 clearly was part of the problem. To protect this Nation, the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq have caused additional spending, but that is not the only reason for the \$600 billion deficit. It was because in the spring of 2001, by a one-vote margin, on a technical part of the budget bill, this Chamber of the Senate passed an instruction that by a majority vote we could pass a tax bill and that tax bill, once we passed it, diminished the revenues so much that the deficit started to swell. We are on a reckless fiscal course, headed toward bankruptcy. Is it any wonder that earlier we heard the majority leader and the Democratic leader going at it over this question of addressing the President's \$87 billion request? That is going to add all the more to the budget deficit. We are going to pass the \$67 billion that is going to the troops because our troops are going to be provided what they need. But for the remaining

\$20 billion that is for building 1,000 schools in Iraq, what do we tell our constituents at home about building schools here? For that \$20 billion that is to fix water systems and roads and bridges in Iraq, what are we to tell our constituents in America about the water systems and the roads and the bridges?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I thank the Presiding Officer for giving me the remainder of the time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I wish to first associate myself with the comments of my friend and colleague, the Senator from Florida, with regard to concerns he raised about all the stress on the National Guard and Reserve. I have been to a number of deployments of troops of the National Guard and Reserve from Minnesota. Our folks are serving admirably and bravely, and there is great stress. I think it is clearly important to make sure we do the things to alleviate the strain, not just on the folks on the front line but on the families, and creating a bit of certainty would be good thing to do. It is not a partisan thing. It is the right thing to do for the folks who are serving so bravely and for their families. So I thank my distinguished colleague from Florida for raising this concern and wish to let him know there are many of us on both sides of the aisle who share that concern and would like a greater sense of certainty.

What does it mean to have boots on the ground? When are our folks coming home? We do have to give them every bit of support we can when they are there. But certainly for the families, the words of my colleague ring true and I associate myself with them.

I do disagree with my colleague from Florida when it comes to his discussion about the economy and the cause and the impact of debt. By the way, debt is a bad thing. I am not going to spend a lot of time talking about that right now, but I do certainly want to raise the issue. The national debt today is not as great as it was in the 1980s, not if you measure it as a percentage of the overall economy. That is the way we have to do it. If you bought a house in the 1980s and you spent \$30,000 and you put \$15,000 down, \$15,000 in cash, you would be in debt 50 percent. As time went on, inflation went on, and you made a little money and you bought a second house in the 1990s, or today, for \$100,000, and you borrowed only \$30,000, you would be twice as much indebted as you were in the 1980s, but the \$30,000 as a percent of the overall value of the house would be less, only 30 percent.

The reality is that the debt today is less than it was in the 1980s. That is not to say debt is ever a good thing, but I think you have to make the facts very clear.

It is also important to understand the cause of that. Let's never forget

that September 11 had a devastating impact on the economy of this country. Let's not forget that WorldCom and Enron and the corporate scandals that undermined the confidence of investors in corporate America—undermined it—had a devastating impact on the American economy. And let us not forget this economy was rolling into recession, was moving into recession at the time President Bush was elected. All these things had an impact.

The other concern and observation I have to make, as a Senator who has been here at this point only about 9 months, is my distinguished friends and colleagues on the other side of the aisle, many of them, have consistently talked about the debt, they have great concerns about the debt, yet the reality has been that every time we have acted on budgets, one of the first things that I and, as a newly elected Member of this body, the Presiding Officer did was we had to resolve the budget for 2003 as soon as we got here. On issue after issue, my friends and colleagues from across the aisle, who loudly proclaim concern about the debt, sought to raise the spending. They sought to increase spending, I believe to the tune of perhaps \$1 trillion of new spending.

So it is hard to hear folks being concerned about the debt when, on issue after issue, they seek to raise spending. We have experienced that as we have gone through the process of approving the 2004 budget. On issue after issue, whatever amount is set in the budget to spend, my colleagues from across the aisle seek to increase that, again to the tune, calculated over 10-year periods, of trillions of dollars. Even for the Government, a trillion dollars is real money.

So, yes, the debt is of concern. The way you deal with the debt is you get the economy moving. That is what the President has done. That is what the tax cuts have stimulated. And then you have the will and resolve to keep a lid on spending.

Again, I urge my friends from across the aisle, every time you vote to increase spending, time and again, take a breath then before you talk about the debt.

I came here this morning to support the President's request for a supplemental appropriation of \$87 billion to support our troops in Iraq and to accelerate the redevelopment of that country to a stable, democratic, and peaceful member of the community of nations. As Senators, we have two responsibilities in this matter. As members of the legislative branch of Government, we must put the administration's proposals to the test to ensure they are prudent, practical, and can achieve the promised results. That is what we do as a legislative body. We also have a responsibility to support our Commander in Chief as he leads us as a nation.

I love the story told about Abraham Lincoln during the time he was leading our Nation in the Civil War. He was