

companies that had contracts with this organization and said, now, remember, we have a contract that says you are not supposed to discuss any of our dealings with any third parties, and we will enforce that provision of our contract, and we expect you not to cooperate with anyone asking any questions. Now, that same contract said that we could waive this; but we are not inclined to do that, which means we really are not inclined to cooperate at all.

Also imagine if this same organization had done 55 internal audits and was now unwilling to share any of them with its stakeholders, the people that had invested in this organization, the people that were served by this organization. The people that had a stake in this organization were not allowed to see any of these internal audits because none of them were allowed to become public.

Now, if this had actually happened, I think there would be a great outcry, especially from my friends on the other side of the aisle. But, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that such a scandal truly exists, so we do not have to imagine a thing.

The Iraqi Free Press. Let me say that again. The Iraqi Free Press, which did not exist 18 months ago because there was no such thing as the Iraqi Free Press, broke a story about the U.N. Oil-for-Food scandal, which could potentially turn out to be the largest scandal in history. In that report they said there was a gentleman named Sevan, and possibly Benon Sevan, who ran the Oil-for-Food program, who may have gotten some of these illegal payments. And this same Mr. Sevan wrote to all of the U.N. contractors saying, now, remember, we have this clause that says you cannot discuss the details of our relationship with any third parties.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would think that the U.N. would want to cooperate with an investigation; and if they truly wanted to cooperate, they would waive the provision that is in the contract and say, go ahead and cooperate with anyone who is investigating appropriately this matter, and do not worry about that provision because we really want to understand the truth in this matter.

Mr. Sevan will not allow the member states of the U.N. to see those 55 audits to understand exactly what was happening internally in the U.N., and specifically with the Oil-for-Food program.

Mr. Speaker, there is a ray of hope in this story. And the ray of hope is that former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker has recently been appointed to investigate this matter. He is a highly respected man and I am sure will do a very good job.

The most important thing we do is not engage in a bunch of rhetoric and outcry and charges and allegations. The most important thing we accomplish here is to actually get to the root of the problem and understand the facts and understand exactly what hap-

pened here and understand whether the allegations are true: that \$10 billion has somehow disappeared, money which was specifically supposed to go to help feed and provide for the health care of the Iraqi people because they are the ones that will ultimately suffer as a result of this scandal. They were supposed to be provided for with the oil riches of their nation in food and oil, and it appears that others used those riches for their own self-gain.

So I encourage all the Members of this body to express not outcry but sincere concern about this issue and use all the resources that we have at our disposal to make sure the U.N. cooperates in the Oil-for-Food scandal investigation and provides Chairman Volcker with all of the information and all of the resources that he needs so that we can thoroughly and properly investigate this matter.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DO NOT POSTPONE THE NOVEMBER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, almost 4 years ago, President Bush came to the office of the Presidency having lost the popular vote in this country by over 500,000 votes, having endured a disputed election in Florida, where there were multiple charges and accusations of fraud and people being denied the right to vote. We had the involvement of the Supreme Court for the first time, I believe, in our Nation's history in making a decision basically to stop the counting of votes in Florida. And so the President came to office under these very unusual circumstances.

I think all of us, all of the country recognized that there was a need for healing in our country, and we hoped that President Bush would do what he promised to do during his campaign: that he would be a uniter, not a divider; that he would govern as a compassionate conservative. But the fact is that President Bush has governed from the far right of his party, and he has perhaps been the most divisive President in recent history.

We all know also that on September 11, 2001, our country was attacked and all Americans pulled together at that time. It was a time when the President had a unique opportunity to mobilize the world in the fight against terrorism. But rather than do that, he chose to go his own way, to use intelligence data that was inaccurate, I believe exaggerated and manipulated, in

order to convince the American people that there was a threat from Iraq, when we now know that the real threat continues to come from al Qaeda and the terrorist network headed by Osama bin Laden, who I would remind all of us is free tonight to plot the next attack upon our Nation.

In the last few hours, something has happened that alarms me, and I think will alarm the American people as they find out about it. Earlier this week, the U.S. Elections Assistant Commissioner, who is a Bush appointee, asked the Homeland Security Secretary, Mr. Tom Ridge, to consider seeking the authority to postpone a Federal election. As a result, the Department of Homeland Security has asked the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel to analyze the steps that would be needed to postpone the November Presidential election.

Mr. Speaker, this is an outrage. The postponement of a Presidential election would present the greatest threat to date to our democratic process. It would be a capitulation to the terrorists, inviting them to disrupt the selection of our highest leader, and it would be unprecedented for a Presidential election.

Not even the Civil War stopped the 1864 Presidential election from taking place. I quote from Abraham Lincoln, November 10, 1864: President Lincoln said, "We cannot have free government without elections; and if the rebellion could force us to forego or postpone a national election, it might already fairly claim to have conquered or ruined us."

In early 1864, President Abraham Lincoln feared that he may lose the Presidency because of widespread criticism of his handling of the Civil War. No President had won a second term since Andrew Jackson, more than 30 years prior, and the Union had recently suffered a string of military disappointments.

□ 1945

Under those conditions, many of Lincoln's closest advisers urged him to postpone the election so that he could focus on the war effort, but Abraham Lincoln never even considered that possibility, nor should we.

The fight against terrorism, like the Civil War, will affect more than a generation of Americans. Let us make sure that in this long fight against terrorism we do not lose what we are fighting for in the first place. I do not know that this would happen, but I think the American people need to be paying attention. Would it be possible that shortly before the elections the residing party in power determined that things were not going so well, would there be a temptation under those circumstances to find some reason to justify postponing the election? We should never even consider such a possibility. I call upon the President to reject this suggestion, and I call upon this Congress to stand together as Republicans and Democrats to say we are

having our Presidential election on November 2, regardless of what the terrorists may seek to do.

OIL-FOR-FOOD PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Chairman, there have been charges over the last number of months, even the last year or two, of various kickbacks and mismanagement of different businesses and different kinds of things that are going on that I have heard from the Democrat Party, but it is interesting that there has been a stony silence when it comes to the biggest scam which is now emerging, the biggest scam in many, many years. It involves not only kickbacks and bribery but it involves even murdering various individuals. I am talking about the new evidence that is emerging on the Oil-for-Food program.

As the Members are perhaps aware, the Oil-for-Food program was a very large program administered by the United Nations. Its purpose was to try to provide humanitarian aid for the Iraqi people and so Saddam was allowed to sell some oil and the oil was supposed to be translated into food which was supposed to get back to his people. What is now emerging and has been emerging for some time is that the United Nations staff that have been administering this program is guilty of gross incompetence, mismanagement and probably complicit with the Iraqi regime in perpetuating the biggest scandal in United Nations history.

It was the largest U.N.-administered program anywhere in the world, that collected a 2.2 percent commission on every barrel of oil sold, and those dollars were put into the Banque Nationale de Paris. According to a February, 2004, article in the New York Times, it says that that money was "an open bazaar of payoffs, favoritism and kickbacks."

Why have we not heard more complaint about this? Why have we not heard complaint that the U.N. is trying to bottle up this information and not allow anybody to check into where this money was going? Particularly why is it that the Democrat Party would want us to turn Iraq over to the United Nations, the very people that are in the middle of perpetuating this scam? I do not understand that.

The emerging evidence suggests that corrupt politicians and businesses throughout the world benefited from this Oil-for-Food program and they kept the Iraqi dictator in power. Those who benefited from the corruption have been listed, some of them prominent United Nations officials, including the son of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The list includes no fewer than 46 Russians and 11 French names. The close connection between French and Russian politicians and the Iraqi dictator suggests at least one reason why these

governments worked so hard to undermine American efforts to enforce the U.N. resolutions and ultimately remove Saddam from power. In fact, what we find is that documents that were discovered in the wreckage of the Iraqi foreign ministry reveal that the French were sharing the contents of confidential meetings and diplomatic traffic from Washington. Details of talks between French President Chirac and President Bush were also reportedly passed on to the Iraqi foreign ministry by French diplomats in Baghdad.

Yet I cannot understand, why would the Democrats criticize us for not obtaining support from the Russians and the French? The Russians and the French were skimming billions of dollars in a huge scam, and there was absolutely no financial reason for them to want to enforce the United Nations sanctions or to join America in messing up their cozy little deal.

I believe the United States should push for an exhaustive and independent investigation of the Oil-for-Food Program. I think Congress should consider linking our continued funding of the United Nations to long overdue reform and the prosecution of the U.N. officials who were taking part in this program.

In January of 2004 in the State of the Union address, President Bush asserted that America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our people. I am glad that he did not need a permission slip, because if we were waiting for the United Nations and for France and for Russia, we would still be waiting. The participation by undermining U.S. efforts in the war on terror is dramatic. Those who, like JOHN KERRY, would seek a permission slip from the U.N. need first to answer the question why the American people should trust their security to an institution whose largest humanitarian program benefited anti-American businesses and political elites, rather than the Iraqi people, a U.N. run by leaders who are part of the biggest scandal in United Nations history.

This needs to be discussed, and we need some answers before we continue to put American dollars into funding a United Nations who was working completely against the interests of the Iraqi people and the interests of freedom around the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OWENS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING THE NATIONAL YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as national cochair to honor the outstanding work of the National Youth Sports Program in my home State of Wisconsin and the 200 programs throughout the Nation and to recognize the essential role NYSP plays in children's lives during those crucial weeks during the summertime.

For 35 years, NYSP has brought organized athletics and academic courses in math and science into the summer routines of low-income children aged 10 to 16. For 5 weeks, children learn leadership skills and work to develop strong moral character through sports. Furthermore, NYSP provides students with education in substance abuse prevention, career instruction and perhaps their first comprehensive physical. In addition, students receive a hot, well-balanced USDA-approved meal each day.

As a former college quarterback and a father of two little boys, I know the opportunity that sports can have on positively impacting the lives of our children. Thanks to NYSP, a soccer field, a basketball court, a swimming pool turns into classrooms. The lessons in these innovative classrooms are civility, teamwork and responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, it is our duty as policymakers to preserve these vital opportunities. It is in the interest of our children and our country to do so.

For proof of the importance of the National Youth Sports Program, I invite the Members to look at two participating institutions that I had the opportunity to visit recently from my home district in western Wisconsin.

At the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, over 300 children participate in NYSP each summer. In addition to excellent athletic and academic instruction from a dedicated staff, these children have participated in a ropes course to foster higher self-esteem, have been treated by local physicians and dentists free of charge, participated in the DARE and GREAT programs with local police officers, and have painted over graffiti found on public property. The NYSP at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is enriching the lives of low-income children while simultaneously enriching the community as a whole. I would like to take this opportunity to thank program director Mary Beth Vahala and the many community volunteers, including Dr. Richard Foss and Dr. Holly Grimslid for their integral role in the success of NYSP at La Crosse.

The NYSP at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, directed by Dr. Bill Harms and Mr. Tom Pratt, has been consistently ranked as one of the top summer programs in the entire Nation. Every summer, over 500 children learn to live the NYSP creed, "to walk tall, talk tall and stand tall." In addition to a wonderful selection of standard athletics at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, students spend time each day studying math and science in an effort to teach the importance of these