

quantities of uranium from Africa' was well-founded.

The report also rebuts many of the widely circulated claims made by Ambassador Joe Wilson about his role in the mission to Niger; the report he made to Washington upon his return; and later his claims that the administration manipulated intelligence. This report reveals that Ambassador Wilson's repeated attacks on the President's credibility were misleading, at best, and without merit.

Furthermore, both reports find that no political pressure was applied to influence intelligence estimates. President Bush and Prime Minister Blair were, in fact, scrupulous in their presentation of the evidence as it was known.

Saddam Hussein intended to resume his illegal weapons programs, and was taking steps to do so. The Butler report corroborates that, prior to the war, Iraq was "carrying out illicit research and development, and procurement activities to seek to sustain its indigenous capabilities."

In other words, Saddam was a threat to our peace, security, and interests. He never abandoned his ultimate goal to acquire WMD. Saddam may have been biding his time, but as the President told the nation, in this case, time was a ticking bomb.

I applaud the efforts of both our Intelligence Committee and our British allies. Their examinations of the intelligence problems and misjudgments prior to the war are crucial to making the reforms necessary to winning the war on terrorism. This war, more than any other, depends on information.

I look forward to the discussion of how we can strengthen our intelligence gathering and analysis. Brave men and women are out in the field, right now, risking their lives to defend America's freedom. They need an intelligence system that backs them up. America needs an intelligence system that works, and works well.

ASBESTOS UPDATE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I would like to report briefly on where things stand on the asbestos negotiations Senator DASCHLE and I have been conducting for the last couple of months.

There is wide agreement that the current asbestos litigation system is disastrous for victims, for jobs, and for the economy.

More than 700,000 individuals have filed claims; approximately 300,000 claims are still pending; more than \$70 billion has already been spent trying to resolve these claims; and more than 70 companies have filed for bankruptcy as a result.

And yet we have very little to show for it. We have a system where the sickest victims of asbestos exposure have to wait in line with thousands of unimpaired claimants.

There are many things that we in Congress cannot agree upon. But every-

one can agree that this system is a mess and must be fixed.

Senators HATCH and LEAHY ironed out a unique solution to the problem. They created a no-fault trust fund for claimants funded by business and insurance that would pay truly sick claimants fair claims values in a prompt manner.

S. 1125 embodied this idea and was reported out of the Judiciary Committee in July of 2003. That bill provided \$108 billion in mandatory funding for claimants.

On April 7, 2004, Senator HATCH and I, along with Senators MILLER, DEWINE, VOINOVICH, CHAMBLISS, HAGEL, and DOMENICI, introduced a substitute bill, S. 2290. S. 2290 increased the funding for claimants to \$114 billion.

Unfortunately, on April 22, that bill only received 50 votes on the floor of the Senate. Why? The opponents' primary complaint was that the funding was insufficient.

I did not want to give up on finding a solution to this crisis. Fortunately, neither did the Democrat leader. So we met and decided to ask Judge Becker, a respected Third Circuit Court of Appeals judge who had been working on asbestos issues with Senator SPECTER, to try to mediate the parties' differences. He did so over a 2-week period in May and was able to get Organized Labor to move from \$153 billion to \$149 billion.

The business and insurance side of the equation moved from the \$114 billion into the mid-\$120 billion range. But no deal was reached.

In June, the minority leader and I met again and agreed to try to negotiate this matter between us, along with the help of the interested parties.

Soon after those negotiations began, the business side made yet another move, this time offering to fund a \$131 billion trust fund. They were told that was still insufficient.

So, at my request, Senator DASCHLE put together a proposal. He proposed a \$141 billion trust fund. He also indicated how his side believed the start up of the fund and pending claims should be handled, among other issues.

In response, I encouraged the business and insurance communities to make their best and final proposal on the size of the fund. I told them that the end-game was near and that it was time for them to do the best they could in terms of a proposal.

As a result, they made a huge move and agreed to fund a \$140 billion trust fund, with roughly \$40 billion funded in the first 5 years.

Now here is the rub. Time is running out. It is now the end of July, and we are set to begin a long recess. We only have 21 days left in this session of Congress to get a bill completed.

So I sat down with Senator DASCHLE earlier this week to try to push negotiations forward. To get a bill, we must begin to tackle the tough issues.

Those tough issues concern funding and pending claims. Because we have

reached the bottom line for business and insurance when it comes to funding, it is time to intensify negotiations on the so-called "start-up" and "pendings" issues.

Business and insurance will not agree to a \$140 billion trust fund and, simultaneously, continue to pay massive sums for ongoing litigation. Either a trust fund is the solution to our problems or it is not.

I have asked Senator DASCHLE to let me know whether he believes his side can move in our direction and not permit leakage in the tort system. If so, substantial progress can be made.

Today, I received a letter from Senator DASCHLE and 12 other Democrats expressing their commitment to "work over the August recess to narrow our differences and secure a compromise that provides necessary relief to victims and businesses."

I deeply appreciate their steadfast commitment to this issue and look forward to hearing from them about how we can solve the asbestos litigation crisis.

AMERICA IS MOVING FORWARD

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, over the past few months, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have come to the Senate floor in a vain effort to convince America that we are worse off than we were 4 years ago.

They offer a pessimistic litany of distorted statistics to discredit the measurable progress America has made in the last 4 years. Just last Friday, the minority leader came to the Senate floor to cast a negative light on America's astonishing rebound from the triple shock of terrorist attacks, corporate scandals, and a recession inherited from the Clinton administration.

It is critical that the American people know the truth.

Far from the other side's woeful depiction, America is moving forward and gaining strength. We have been tested, and we have proven ourselves to be a tough, resilient and resourceful nation.

America remains the economic engine of the world. While our European friends struggle with double digit unemployment, America's unemployment rate is at historic lows and dropping.

Are we better off? Four years ago, President Bush inherited an economy that measured \$9.8 trillion. Today, the economy has grown almost \$1 trillion more.

Are we better off? Four years ago, President Bush inherited an economy that was the equivalent to roughly \$25,000 for every person. Today, that number has grown to nearly \$30,000.

Are we better off? Four years ago, President Bush inherited an economy that employed 136.9 million people. Today, the number of people working has grown by nearly 2 million and is on track to create 1.2 million jobs this year.

Contrary to claims made by critics, the quality of jobs being created is excellent. Three quarters of the new jobs