

high would have had to hit that bridge, positioned some 12 miles from the gulf up Pensacola Bay. It would take 40 feet of water to have enough pressure to raise the sections of Interstate 10's bridge off of the pilings and deposit them in the bottom of Pensacola Bay. And in many other sections of the bridge, the same effort moved it 3 and 4 feet on top of the pilings.

Even at the end of Pensacola Bay, some 20 to 25 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, the wave of water was so fast and so furious that as to the four-lane highway, US 90, that rings the shore of Pensacola Bay on that far northern end, two lanes of those four lanes were washed out at the bridgeheads and thus, is complicating the rescue efforts, the rebuilding efforts because of traffic not being able to get to Pensacola, with only two-way traffic open on one of those lanes that had been spared.

We are finding out once again, because we keep coming with emergency appropriations for Federal disaster relief, that hurricanes can be quite costly, as we have known over the years. It was my freshman year in the Congress in 1979 that I voted for my first disaster relief, which was in response to the eruption of Mount St. Helens in the State of Washington covering so much of that State with soot and ash. But that is in part what a Federal Government is for—to respond in times of emergency and disaster.

So, too, we have seen the President request \$2 billion for the first hurricane and disaster relief—that won't take care of all of the relief for Charley—and another \$3.1 billion was requested for Charley and Frances. That certainly won't take care of those two storms because there is another billion dollars of agricultural relief that is going to be needed that the President did not request. But we haven't even gotten to the third hurricane, Hurricane Ivan. As we speak, those calculations are being made. This Congress is going to have to respond.

Last week I had a colloquy with the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, the distinguished Senator from Alaska. He assured me and gave me his commitment that he would proceed on the agricultural relief with regard to Hurricane Frances and Hurricane Charley in the conference on the Homeland Security Appropriations bill. Huge parts of the \$65 billion-a-year agricultural industry in Florida have been destroyed—citrus, both orange and grapefruit; the nursery industry, including the fern industry, of which Florida is one of the major growers of ferns; vegetables; fruits; cattle; dairy cows that dried up because they could not be milked since there was no electricity to operate the automatic milking machines. You can go on down the list of all the agricultural commodities that were hit as well as the equipment those farmers owned.

But now with Ivan in the panhandle, we are going to have additional agri-

cultural losses, particularly from cotton and peanuts. I dare say that will be shared with the State of Alabama, perhaps with Georgia, as Ivan raced across the southern United States after it had made landfall at the Florida-Alabama border.

It is interesting that in our State, having been put in hurricane mode for 6 weeks, people began to recover from one blow and then here comes another blow. In fact, the people in the center part of the State on the first two storms were hit twice where the two storms passed and happened to cross—Charley from southwest to northeast, Frances from southeast to northwest. And they crossed their paths in the center of the State.

Then along comes Ivan. At one point we even thought the State of Florida might be spared. It looked as if it was going to be bearing down on, Lord forbid, New Orleans, which is lower than sea level, or Mississippi where so many of the establishments there, including the gaming industry, are on floating boats. You can imagine the wreckage that would have caused.

But it shifted to the east, bearing down on the Florida-Alabama line, with the winds coming off in a counterclockwise rotation off of the Gulf of Mexico, in its most fierce fury, on to the shores of that southern Alabama coastline and northwestern Florida coastline.

That is a part of our State that has a great deal of the national assets of our U.S. military. Ninety percent of the buildings at the Pensacola Naval Air Station had severe damage. At Whiting Field, where Navy pilots and Marine pilots and Coast Guard pilots and Air Force pilots, both fixed wing and helicopter, are trained, all of the hangars sustained major roof damage with the roofs being ripped off of those large structures. So, as we have responded after the other two hurricanes with special appropriations to fix up those military facilities so they can get back in the business of training our young men and women so they can defend this country, so, too, we are now going to have to address those particular needs even as far east on that Florida panhandle as Eglin Air Force Base which had its major tower completely taken out of commission.

The Senate will hear me, over and over, advocating and trying to articulate the needs for a State that is in crisis, a State that has been hit not once but three times by the hard and savage blows of Mother Nature.

Floridians are a hardy lot. Floridians have endured hurricanes before. Floridians will do it this time. In the meantime, let's have the Government do one of the things that it does best—respond to the needs of its people when the needs of the people are so desperate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that time charged under the quorum call be divided equally.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for not more than 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

THE SITUATION IN RUSSIA: BACK IN THE USSR

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I have spoken often about Vladimir Putin's "creeping coup" against the forces of democracy and market capitalism in Russia. It is with regret that I note today that the coup is no longer creeping—it is running full steam ahead. President Putin is crassly using the horrific Beslan attack to consolidate autocratic rule. The people of Russia, no safer because of the Kremlin's power grab, will ultimately pay the price. Their freedom and the future of Russia as a democratic state are at stake.

The terrorist attack on a school in Beslan illustrated once again the ugly face of extremism that will stop at nothing—not even the deliberate killing of schoolchildren—in pursuit of its political aims. Like millions of others around the world, this terrible event moved my heart, and I offer my sympathy to the families who have suffered so grievously throughout the ordeal. As with all deaths in terrorist attacks, nothing anyone does can bring back the lost. It is the duty of political leaders to remember the fallen by taking steps to ensure that such attacks do not again occur.

And yet Mr. Putin chose the immediate aftermath of this attack not to address the root causes of Chechen terrorism, nor to take meaningful steps that would enhance the safety and security of the Russian people. Instead, he used the attack as an excuse—an excuse to consolidate power and further remove the Russian people from democracy.

President Putin has announced that, because Russia faces terrorist threats, significant changes within the government are required. In the broadest sense, he is right. In the midst of the Beslan hostage standoff, government officials repeatedly lied about what was happening inside the school. The military was unable to rescue people and could not coordinate a response. Furthermore, recent accounts indicate that during the near-simultaneous bombing of two Russian passenger aircraft, the suicide bombers bribed their way through checkpoints and onto the planes. These problems stem from the

Kremlin's lack of transparency, the government's lack of accountability, and from widespread corruption and ineptitude. And so a reasonable observer might guess that the Kremlin seeks governmental change that addresses these problems. But a reasonable observer would be wrong.

Instead, Mr. Putin has proposed changes that would concentrate his personal power and nearly extinguish the embers of democracy in his country. His allies have told journalists that the president planned for months to centralize political authority, and merely took advantage of the Beslan seizure to unveil the decision. And, as the Washington Post has pointed out, he has not removed security officials who have failed to prevent repeated terrorist strikes over several years.

The total effect of President Putin's new proposals would be to move Russia a long way down the road to autocratic rule. He would eliminate the popular election of Russia's 89 regional governors, and instead appoint them himself. He would eliminate independent members of parliament, so that Russians could vote only for political parties rather than specific candidates, Political parties—such as like the powerful one headed by Mr. Putin—would determine the slates. In last December's elections, district races accounted for every independent and liberal now serving in the Duma. Under Mr. Putin's plan, these races would be abolished. I speak of all of these ideas as "proposals" because the electoral changes require parliamentary approval. But that should not be difficult—Mr. Putin's party controls more than two-thirds of the seats.

As shocking as these recent moves are, they are simply the latest and most egregious in a long string of anti-democratic actions. In his time in power, Mr. Putin has tried to eliminate independent media by imposing restrictive laws. These have led to the takeover or arbitrary closing of all independent national television channels. The international media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders ranked 166 countries in its annual World Press Freedom report. Russia came in 148th. Last year, five reporters were killed under suspicious circumstances, and many reporters were harassed, imprisoned, or physically beaten.

But the media is not the only sector to fear the wrath of an increasingly authoritarian Kremlin. Mr. Putin has asserted control over Russia's energy industry and used government power—including imprisonment—against executives who oppose him. The world has watched with concern over his single-handed attempt to put Russia's largest privately held oil company out of business. And, having lost their rights to free speech and press and to engage freely in an open market, the people of Russia are now on their way to losing the right to vote.

The Kremlin's imposition of old-style central control will not make the peo-

ple of Russia safer, it will merely curtail their freedoms. But terrorism in Russia does not result from too much freedom. If anything, it stems in part from the Kremlin's reluctance to address the legitimate aspirations of the Chechen people for autonomy or independence. Moving in the opposite direction, increasing central control and decreasing the say of citizens in how their nation is governed, will do nothing but aggravate the problems for which Mr. Putin proposes solutions.

Sadly, many Russians have responded to the Kremlin's new proposals not with outrage but with fearful plaudits. Regional leaders—many of whom may lose their jobs when they are replaced by Kremlin appointees—have nevertheless praised Mr. Putin's power grab. The Tass news agency ran a headline last week entitled "Regional leaders hail Putin's latest moves as a panacea for all Russia's ills." This kind of response is eerily familiar, a reminder of the ridiculous propaganda fed to the Russian people and the world by the Soviet police state. I thought that the Russian people have moved beyond this sordid past, throwing off the shackles of oppression and ushering in a new day of freedom. I will bet that the people of Russia though the same. But obviously Mr. Putin and the Kremlin have other ideas.

As the world's beacon of freedom and democracy, the United States must make clear our fierce opposition to the path that Russia's leadership is currently on. As much as we value Russia's cooperation in other areas of our bilateral relationship, they will have little meaning if Moscow reverts to its old ways. Mr. Putin, the world is watching your next move.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NO PLAN FOR IRAQ

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, earlier today at the United Nations the President of the United States painted a pretty picture of the occupation of Iraq. But the President's picture was far from reality. The reality is the situation facing our soldiers, the very limited Iraqi security forces, and, importantly, the Iraqi people.

The reality is that today Iraq is in flames. A horrifying wave of violence has struck yet again, targeting the Iraqi police, Government leaders, innocent civilians, and our very own troops. The death toll in Iraq continues to mount. As of today, more than 1,030 American troops have died in this war, a war that should not have been fought, a war which was wrong in the beginning, wrong today.

More than 700 Iraqi police have perished in the short time since the force has existed. The numbers of civilians killed in President Bush's preemptive war is unknown. They may never be known. But it numbers in the thousands—the widows and the orphans who have been left alone, the tears that have been shed.

Who is responsible for this bloodshed in Iraq? Is it a small group of religious radicals, or the secret agents of Osama bin Laden, or terrorists who might otherwise sneak out onto the streets of New York City? No, no, and no. An ever growing pile of press reports indicates that the insurgency is larger and more broad than the White House will admit.

On Wednesday, September 15, the Wall Street Journal reported that "Iraq's once highly fragmented insurgent groups are increasingly cooperating to attack U.S. and Iraqi government targets, and steadily gaining control of more areas of the country."

That was the Wall Street Journal of Wednesday, September 15.

Meanwhile, the Commander in Chief, President Bush, seems to be in the dark about the worsening situation in Iraq. Faced with the spread of violence in Iraq, the President continues to speak of Iraq as a country of free people. But what liberty, what liberty, is there to be enjoyed when the police are being killed by the scores, the chances of a peaceful election have been thrown out the window, and many Iraqis are too afraid to send their children to school?

One must begin to question whether the President is getting the bad news about what is happening on the streets of Baghdad and Fallujah or if he is simply ignoring it. Surely the Commander in Chief has a responsibility, has the obligation, to change his strategy when it has been proven a failure. Instead, the White House blindly insists that the problems of Iraq will sort themselves out if we simply maintain a resolve to stay the course. Did the American people really want to stay the course that has resulted in the deaths and the injuries of thousands of our troops?

Now the President wants to spend another \$3.4 billion in reconstruction funds to again try to bolster the same Iraqi security forces that have been outgunned and inadequately trained to take on the insurgents in Iraq. This is even more evidence, is it not, even more evidence that the administration had no plan, that the administration has no plan for postwar Iraq, other than to throw more money at the problem and hope for the best.

As the cost of the war continues to spin out of control, we must remember that last fall the Bush administration promised that its request for the biggest foreign aid package in half a century would bring security and stability to Iraq. The White House got enough Members of Congress to vote for \$18.4 billion to buy that pig in a poke, and the President got unprecedented flexibility to spend that reconstruction