

waste, fraud or abuse are harassed, threatened, silenced, or demoted. That is the opposite of what should happen, and it is long overdue for whistleblowers to be given the protection and recourse they deserve. This provision, among other things, calls for independent adjudicatory bodies, including "external arbitration based on consensus selection and shared costs". I believe that access to external arbitration is long overdue, and I urge the World Bank and the other MDBs to act expeditiously to implement this and the other reforms called for in this provision.

The conference report provides \$1.77 billion for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, MCC. While this represents a deep cut from the President's request, it reflects the tight budgetary constraints we faced. The conference allocation required us to cut nearly \$2 billion from the President's total request and therefore many programs, including the MCC, were not fully funded.

I support the goals of the MCC, and I look forward to working with the new CEO Ambassador Danilovich. We know that foreign aid is most effective when governments are committed to fighting corruption and addressing the needs of their people, and when public officials, civil society and the private sector work together to reduce poverty.

I am pleased that the conference agreement includes language emphasizing the importance of strong participation from indigenous civil society organizations to help ensure that the MCC is responsive to local people's concerns. It is through the meaningful participation of civil society that democracy is strengthened, good governance is valued, and open discussions of how best to achieve national priorities are accomplished. The conference agreement requires the MCC to submit a report that details how contributions of indigenous civil society have been incorporated in completed compact negotiations.

The conference report provides funds above the President's request for both the Inter-American Foundation and the African Development Foundation. The Congress strongly supports the work of these foundations which support local initiatives to increase income for Latin America's and Africa's poorest people.

I was very pleased that the conference report provides additional assistance for civilian victims of the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. We provide \$5 million for the Marla Ruzicka Iraqi War Victims Fund for assistance for Iraqi families and communities, which is named for Marla Ruzicka, the founder of Campaign for Civilian Victims of Conflict. Ms. Ruzicka died, at the age of 28, along with her colleague Faiz Ali Salim, in a car bombing in Baghdad on April 16, 2005. We also provide \$2 million for assistance for Afghan families and communities that have suffered

losses as a result of the military operations. By providing this assistance the United States is seeking to alleviate the suffering, as well as the anger and resentment, resulting from tragic mistakes that occur in the military operations.

I was also pleased that the conference report includes \$15 million to support an initiative I sponsored to combat certain neglected diseases. Lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, intestinal parasites, schistosomiasis, leprosy, and trachoma cause terrible suffering and disfigurement among hundreds of millions of people in mostly tropical countries. In addition to providing additional funds to prevent and treat these diseases, this initiative seeks to develop a multilateral, integrated approach to coordinate and maximize donor contributions to control them. This is important because current efforts are poorly coordinated and underfunded. As with the infectious diseases initiative I sponsored nearly a decade ago, I look forward to working with USAID, other Federal agencies, the World Health Organization, and the relevant international technical and nongovernmental organizations to develop such an approach that has broad support.

I was disappointed that the amount provided for the Global Environmental Facility, \$80 million, fell \$27 million short of the U.S. pledge. I want to emphasize that this cut does not reflect any dissatisfaction on the part of the conferees with the GEF, which had taken steps to adopt management and transparency reforms advocated by the United States, but instead was due to budgetary constraints. As a strong supporter of the GEF I am hopeful that we can make up this shortfall in the fiscal year 2007 budget.

The conference report supports the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which aims to improve the capacity of developing countries to sustainably manage the extraction of natural resources and to monitor revenues generated from such extraction so they are used for purposes which benefit their people. This is an anti-corruption, good governance initiative spearheaded by the British Government, which responds to the longstanding practice in many developing countries of exploiting natural resources in a wasteful and environmentally destructive manner that benefits only the elites. The conference agreement provides \$1 million for USAID to support EITI implementation and to strengthen the role and capacity of civil society organizations in the EITI process. This is another issue I look forward to discussing with USAID before funds are obligated.

Finally, I want to mention the funding in the conference report for USAID Operating Expenses, which was cut by \$50 million below the administration's request. Again, this was the result of the budgetary constraints we faced, but it also reflects some concerns with

USAID's management of appropriated funds. This cut will force USAID to make difficult choices, which should be the subject of consultations with the Appropriations Committees.

There are many other provisions in this conference report that I do not have time here to recount. I want to again thank my friend from Kentucky, Senator MCCONNELL, who has been a pleasure to work with. I also thank our counterparts in the House, Congressman KOLBE and Congresswoman LOWEY, and their capable staffs. I commend the Senate majority staff, Paul Grove, Tom Hawkins, Harry Christy, Bob Lester and LaShawnda Smith. They put in long hours and they held themselves to the highest standards. And for the minority, I thank Tim Rieser, Kate Eltrich and Jennifer Park.

EAST TIMOR

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to mention one other item in the Foreign Operations conference report. It does not earmark Foreign Military Financing funds for Timor-Leste, formerly East Timor, the world's newest democracy and a friend of the United States. However, we do not earmark funding for many of the countries for which FMF was requested, but we provide \$241.7 million in FMF assistance to cover these needs, including for Timor-Leste. The administration's budget request included \$1.5 million in FMF for East Timor. The fact that we did not earmark these funds for Timor-Leste should not be misinterpreted as an indication of any disagreement on the part of the conferees with the administration's request.

Mr. MCCONNELL. That is correct. We did not earmark FMF for Timor-Leste but we intend the administration to provide an amount similar to the request. We also provided \$1.5 million in International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, INCLE assistance for Timor-Leste, for on the ground police training, as well as \$19 million in Economic Support Fund assistance. The cut in ESF from the fiscal year 2005 level of \$22 million was due, in part, to the earmark in INCLE assistance which had not been requested by the administration.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, do I have time under the consent agreement?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator does.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for a period of time in as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, are we now in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I send a bill to the desk for appropriate referral to the committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill will be received and appropriately referred.

(The remarks of Mr. KERRY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1993 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006—Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 2507

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, sometime later today when we dispose of a few of the next amendments, Senator LEVIN, on behalf of leadership and a group of Senators on our side of the aisle—and we hope others might join in—will be submitting an amendment with respect to the issue of Iraq. I am pleased to join in that with them. I look forward to participating in that debate at that time. I have come to the Senate at this moment to introduce an amendment that lays out what, in my judgment, represents a comprehensive and new strategy that is essential for the President to implement in order to successfully complete the mission in Iraq, as well as to bring our troops home in a reasonable timeframe.

At a news conference a week ago I referred to this in a speech I gave recently. I left Iraq departing on a C-130 from Mosul, together with Senator WARNER and Senator STEVENS. The three Senators and the staff, all of us, were gathered in this cavernous C-130. In the middle of the cargo hold was a simple aluminum coffin with a small American flag draped over it. We were bringing another American soldier home to his family and to his resting place.

The starkness of the coffin in the center of that hold, and the silence—except for the din of the engines; believe me, there was a kind of silence notwithstanding—was a real-time, cold reminder of the consequences of decisions for which all of us as Senators bear responsibility.

As we enter a make-or-break 6-month period in Iraq, that long journey of that soldier and 2,000-plus more of them remind us, all of us, about our responsibilities with respect to the troops in Iraq. It underscores the need to help this administration take steps that will bring our troops home within a reasonable timeframe from an Iraq that is not permanently torn by conflict.

Some say we should not ask tough questions because we are at war. I say, no. A time of war, that is precisely when you have to ask the hardest questions of all. It is essential, if we want to correct our course and do what is right for our troops, that instead of repeating the same mistakes over and

over again, we ask those questions. No matter what the President says, asking tough questions is not pessimism. It is patriotism. We have a responsibility to our troops and our country and our conscience to be honest about where we should go from here.

There is a way forward that gives us the best chance to both salvage a difficult situation in Iraq and to save American and Iraqi lives. With so much at stake, we all have a responsibility to follow the best way forward.

No. 1, we cannot pull out precipitously, as many argue and call for, but also we cannot merely promise to stay as long as it takes. The promise simply to stay as long as it takes, in fact, exacerbates the situation. It is not a policy. To undermine the insurgency we must, instead, simultaneously pursue a political settlement that gives Sunnis a real stake in the future of Iraq, while at the same time reducing the sense of American occupation. That means a phased withdrawal of American troops as we meet a series of military and political benchmarks, starting, I have said, with a reduction of 20,000 troops over the holidays as we meet the first benchmark—the completion of the December elections.

Earlier today, my good friend, the Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, made a speech in which he mischaracterized my plan to bring our troops home within a reasonable timeframe and to succeed in Iraq. He mischaracterized how one arrived at 20,000 troops. The fact is, that is a benchmark. It is a benchmark set by this administration itself. The fact is, most of last year, during which time the administration says we have adequate troops to do the job, we had about 138,000 troops in Iraq. The fact is, for the purposes of the constitutional referendum and for the purposes of the election, the administration upped the number of troops in order to guarantee security for the purpose of those two events.

I have said specifically that when those two events are completed successfully, and with the increased numbers of Iraqis trained, there is no excuse for not being in a position to go from the current 161,000 down to the 138,000, where we were before, where our generals told us we had enough troops to do the job. That figure is set not by any arbitrary standard but by the accomplishment of the specific benchmark.

It is also critical that we send this signal to the Iraqi people that we do not desire a permanent occupation and that Iraqis themselves must fight for Iraq. History shows again and again that guns alone do not end an insurgency, and guns alone, particularly, will not end this insurgency. The real struggle in Iraq is not what the President has described again and again as the war on terror as we know it against al-Qaida. The real struggle in Iraq is Sunni versus Shiite. It is a struggle that has gone on for years with oppres-

sor and oppressed, and it will only be settled by a political solution. No political solution can be achieved when the antagonists can rely on indefinite large-scale presence of occupying American combat troops.

The reality is our military presence in vast and visible numbers has become part of the problem, not just the solution. Our own generals are telling us this in open hearings of the Senate. Our generals understand this well. GEN George Casey, our top military commander in Iraq, recently told Congress that our large military presence "feeds the notion of occupation" and "extends the amount of time that it will take for Iraqi security forces to become self-reliant," and Richard Nixon's Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, breaking a 30-year silence, writes:

Our presence is what feeds the insurgency, and our gradual withdrawal would feed the confidence and the ability of average Iraqis to stand up to the insurgency.

It comes down to this: An open-ended declaration "to stay as long as it takes," lets Iraqi factions maneuver for their own political advantage by making us stay as long as they want. It becomes an excuse for billions of American tax dollars to be sent to Iraq and siphoned off into the coffers of cronyism and corruption.

When I was last in Iraq, at a dinner put on by the Ambassador and others with the Minister of Defense—the Minister of Interior, the Prime Minister, and others—we sat and listened while they told us themselves of the corruption that has been taking place in the disbursement of American taxpayer funds.

This administration needs to pay attention to that corruption. The administration must also use all of the leverage in America's arsenal—our diplomacy, the presence of our troops, our reconstruction money, all of the diplomacy—in order to convince the Shiites and the Kurds to address the legitimate Sunni concerns about regional autonomy and oil revenues and to make Sunnis accept the reality that they will no longer dominate Iraq. We cannot and we should not do this alone.

The administration must immediately call a conference of Iraq's neighbors: Britain, Turkey, other key NATO allies, and Russia. The absence of legitimate international effort with respect to this is, frankly, absolutely extraordinary. I am not alone in calling for that. Republicans, colleagues on the other side of the aisle, Senator HAGEL, others, have talked about the need for an international leverage in order to help resolve this issue. Together we have to implement a collective strategy to bring the parties in Iraq to a sustainable political compromise that also includes mutual security guarantees among Iraqis. To maximize our diplomacy, the President should appoint a special envoy to bolster Ambassador Khalilzad's commendable efforts.

To enlist the support of Iraqi Sunni neighbors, we should commit to a new