

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, last week in his surprise visit to Baghdad, President Bush was full of happy talk. "The progress here in Iraq has been remarkable when you really think about it," he said.

But as usual, with this administration, there is a side of the story you don't hear until it leaks out.

Over the weekend, the Washington Post reported on a memo under the name of U.S. Ambassador of Iraq Zalmay Khalizad, which describes the treacherous living conditions faced by Iraqi nationals who work for the U.S. Embassy.

The cable cites harassment from militia groups, hostility from security forces, the ones we have trained, sporadic utilities in 115-degree heat, scarce and expensive fuel, women forced to cover their faces in public, kidnappings of family members, fear of recrimination if it is discovered that they are employed by the embassy and are thus aiding the occupation. Some of these men and women haven't even told their families where they work.

Mr. Speaker, is this the freedom that the President says is transforming the Middle East?

The dispatch describes the central government, the one we have heard the Bush administration pump up to no end, as ineffective and "not relevant." Embassy staff report that it is actually local militia and neighborhood governments that control the streets.

After 2,500 American deaths, more than a quarter of a trillion dollars spent, and our global reputation lying in tatters, we still don't have a grip on basic security in Iraq. It is absolutely scandalous.

Mr. Speaker, if the men and women who work for the U.S. Government feel threatened, how can we possibly hope to maintain peace, rule of law and basic services for millions of ordinary Iraqis living outside of the bubble of the Green Zone?

It couldn't be clearer. We are not trusted, respected or beloved in Iraq. Our military presence is not providing relief from an atmosphere of resentment, danger and paranoia in Iraq; we are contributing to it. In fact, we are exacerbating it.

There is only one answer, Mr. Speaker. It is time, in fact, it is long past time, for our troops to come home. We can help Iraqis build a more promising future. We can help them rebuild their country and do our best to help them resolve sectarian strife. But we can do it only as a partner, not as an occupier. We can do it only if we end this disastrous war, only if we return Iraq to the Iraqis and return our troops to their families.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXTENSIONS OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask permission to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express strong support for extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The importance and necessity of the Voting Rights Act cannot be over-emphasized. We have learned through experience what a difference the vote makes. In 1964, the year before President Johnson signed the act into law, there were only 300 African American elected officials in the entire country. Today there are more than 9,100 black elected officials, including 43 Members of Congress.

The most fundamental right of our democratic system of government is the right of citizens to participate in the political process. The 15th amendment ensures the right of every citizen, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, to vote and participate in the electoral process. However, as we have seen in previous elections, some local governments have actively and, in some instances, have aggressively attempted to disenfranchise African American and other minority voters.

This year, all who care about social justice and equal opportunity in America can share one overriding goal, and that is Congress needs to review the provisions of the Voting Rights Act which will ensure that our Nation's government has the opportunity to reflect the views, the values and, most importantly, the votes of the people it serves.

Of all the civil rights legislation that the Nation has enacted over the past four decades, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is arguably the most important. Yes, every major piece of civil rights legislation has helped to eliminate injustices such as discrimination in education, employment and housing, but it is the Voting Rights Act that empowers Americans to take action against injustices by electing those who pledge to eliminate it and removing those who perpetuate it.

African Americans in the South were prevented from voting by a battery of tactics, poll taxes, literacy tests that

were for blacks only, and the crudest forms of intimidation. From the Southwest to some urban areas in the Northeast and Midwest, Latinos were discouraged from voting in more subtle but just as effective techniques that exploited the vulnerabilities of low-income newcomers for whom English was a second language. Both groups were also the targets of districting designed to dilute the ability to elect officials of their own choosing, a fundamental freedom that all too many Americans take for granted.

And this is why it is so important that Congress renew all three provisions that are set to expire: section 5, which requires Federal approval for all proposed changes in voting or election procedures in areas with a history of discrimination; section 203, which requires some jurisdictions to provide assistance in other languages to voters who are not literate or fluent in English; and the portions of section 6-9 of the act which authorizes the Federal Government to send Federal election examiners and observers to certain jurisdictions covered by section 5 where there is evidence of attempts to intimidate minority voters at the polls.

Mr. Speaker, this act is scheduled to come before us in the next few days, and I am gratified to note that it has generated tremendous support on both sides of the aisle. And I am certain that American people all over the country look forward to its passage. I simply urge strong support.

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

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

MORALITY TALE ON AIDS

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Washington is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to really tell a morality tale that the American people may well not know anything about. Many things go on in the world, and we learn nothing in our press. But if you read widely, as I do, and read something called the Asia Times, which is one of many newspapers around the world, you find out very interesting things are going on.

Everyone knows that there is a problem with AIDS worldwide, and the problem with AIDS is that we, today, have the ability to actually treat people with AIDS with the triple therapy drugs that will make their life longer, allow them to continue working, allow them to take care of their children,

create less orphans. There are many, many positive benefits from triple therapy around the world.

The problem is the drugs are made in the Western world where they are very, very expensive. In the Asia Times story, an article entitled World Health, A Lethal Dose of U.S. Politics, that is dated 6/19/2006, that I will enter into the RECORD, this article talks about a veteran World Health Organization professional by the name of William Aldis, who found himself in such conflict with the World Health Organization that he was fired. Now, they called it a promotion. They put him elsewhere. But basically they put him in a position where he would have no power similar to what he had before. He was the representative to Thailand.

Now, Thailand's use of these medications has reduced their level of deaths from AIDS by 79 percent. These drugs are effective, but very expensive. And the problem is that under the World Trading Organization rules, countries are allowed to make their own or to develop generics that are much less expensive.

Now, Thailand comes to the point where they want to develop a bilateral trade relationship with the United States. And the United States, at that point, uses their muscle to say to the Thais, you no longer can have this loose standard of developing drugs. You must abide by United States intellectual property law.

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Therefore, you are cut off from an expensive source of the medication that is in use in Thailand today and in many other countries in the world.

Now, this is a question of morality. We have the capacity to treat the millions of people who are living with AIDS and thousands of them, millions dying every year. We have the ability to treat them. But on the other side, we have the pharmaceutical industry that says we want to get the last nickel, we want to get the most money out of this situation that we can get. And the United States Government is helping the pharmaceutical industry squeeze the Third World.

Now, a lot of people say why does the rest of the world dislike America? It is this kind of stuff that goes on under the radar screen of most people in this country who do not understand what is going on who, therefore, do not understand why the rest of the world looks at us as being in it for ourselves and no one else. We can talk all we want to about liberty, and we can talk all we want about the free enterprise system and all these things, but when it comes down to money we put the squeeze on.

Now, you say, well, hasn't the President been generous? Hasn't he put \$15 billion out there to deal with the AIDS epidemic? Yes, in theory he has made that and some of that money has been appropriated out of this House, but it is being used to buy drugs that are much more costly. We could buy many

more drugs if we would buy generics produced in these countries by themselves.

Now, recently there was a Congressional Research Service report, and this is our research service in the Library of Congress, that said that the United States' main purpose for pursuing bilateral FDAs is to advance U.S. intellectual property protection rather than promoting free trade.

This is wrong, and the American people should know about it and insist that their government make available the drugs for the rest of the world's treatment.

The material previously referred to is as follows:

WORLD HEALTH: A LETHAL DOSE OF U.S. POLITICS

(By Dylan C. Williams)

BANGKOK.—When World Health Organization (WHO) director general Lee Jong-wook died of a cerebral hemorrhage last month before the start of the United Nations agency's annual World Health Assembly, the world's most prominent public-health official was arguably of a conflicted mind.

The WHO veteran was caught in the middle of an intensifying global debate over how to reconcile intellectual-property protection with the pressing public-health need to expand and access to expensive life-saving medicines, a hot-button issue that has sharply divided WHO member states along developed- and developing-country lines.

An Asia Times Online investigation reveals that at the time of his death, Lee, a South Korean national, had closely aligned himself with the U.S. government and by association U.S. corporate interests, often to the detriment of the WHO's most vital commitments and positions, including its current drive to promote the production and marketing of affordable generic antiretroviral drugs for millions of poor infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which can cause AIDS.

According to senior and middle-ranking WHO officials familiar with the situation, Lee blatantly bent to U.S. government pressure in March when he made the controversial decision to recall the WHO country representative to Thailand, William Aldis, who had served less than 16 months in what traditionally has been a four-year or longer posting.

Aldis had made the mistake of penning a critical opinion piece in the Bangkok Post newspaper in February that argued in consonance with WHO positions that Thailand should carefully consider before surrendering its sovereign right to produce or import generic life-saving medicines as allowed by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in exchange for a bilateral free-trade agreement (FTA) with the United States, which is currently under negotiation.

The WHO official also wrote that the stricter intellectual-property protection measures in the proposed U.S.-Thailand FTA would inevitably lead to higher drug prices and thereby jeopardize the lives of "hundreds of thousands" of Thai citizens who now depend on access to locally produced cheap medicines to survive. He noted too that the Thai government's current production of generic treatments had allowed the country to reduce AIDS-related deaths by a whopping 79 percent.

Aldis' arguments directly mirrored stated WHO positions, but significantly were at direct odds with the objectives of current U.S. trade policy, which through the establishment of bilateral FTAs aims to bind signa-

tory countries into extending their national intellectual-property legislation far beyond the parameters of current WTO agreed standards.

A recent U.S. Congressional Research Service report states that the United States main purpose for pursuing bilateral FTAs is to advance U.S. intellectual-property protection rather than promoting more free trade. The Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority Act of 2002, the applicable U.S. legislation for bilateral FTAs, states explicitly that Trade-Related Intellectual Property Standards, or TRIPS, are by law non-negotiable and must reflect a standard of protection similar to that found in U.S. law.

A U.S. ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva paid a private visit to Lee on March 23 to express Washington's displeasure with Aldis' newspaper commentary, according to WHO officials familiar with the meeting. A follow-up letter from the U.S. government addressed to Lee strongly impressed Washington's view of the importance of the WHO to remain "neutral and objective" and requested that Lee personally remind senior WHO officials of those commitments, according to a WHO staff member who reviewed the correspondence.

The next day, Lee informed the regional office in New Delhi of his decision to recall Aldis.

Perhaps strategically, Aldis' removal coincided with the height of Thailand's recent political crisis, and failed to generate any local media attention at the time. Internally, Lee had characterized Aldis' transfer to a research position of considerable less authority in New Delhi as a promotion.

But a Geneva-based WHO official familiar with the situation said the article "was seen as stepping over unseen boundaries which the director general set for himself and his staff when dealing with the U.S. It was a disappointing reaction, a sad reaction, but under Lee's administration not a surprise."

Suwit Wibulpolprasert, senior adviser to the Thai Ministry of Public Health, early this month sent a formal letter to acting WHO director general Anders Nordstrom, requesting an official explanation for Aldis' abrupt removal.

According to a WHO official in Geneva with knowledge of the correspondence, the letter raised questions about possible U.S. influence behind the irregular personnel rotation and said that if the WHO decision was motivated by Aldis' comments on the U.S.-Thai FTA, then the WHO should reconsider the transfer.

Suwit also raised his concerns about the level of transparency and freedom of speech inside the WHO. In e-mail communication with this correspondent, Suwit said WHO officials had already denied that Aldis' recall was related to the opinions stated in the Bangkok Post article. A regional WHO official in New Delhi told a senior Thai public-health official that Aldis' removal was related to "inefficiency" in performing his functions—a characterization that Thai officials who worked alongside him through the 2004 tsunami and ongoing avian-influenza scare have privately contested.

News of Aldis' transfer, which oddly was first leaked by a Bangkok-based U.S. official, quickly spread through the global health organization. The June edition of the highly regarded medical journal *The Lancet*, which otherwise painted a flattering portrait of Lee's tenure, drew on anonymous WHO sources to characterize Lee's decision on Aldis as a "clear signal of U.S. influence on WHO."

A senior WHO official who spoke to Asia Times Online on condition of anonymity believes that Lee's decision and its subsequent leak by the U.S. government was specifically

designed to engender more self-censorship among other WHO country representatives when they comment publicly on the intersection of U.S. trade and WHO public-health policies.

A large number of WHO staff members are employed on renewable 11-month contracts, meaning that their standing inside the organization is on perpetually shaky ground and hence curbs their ability to voice critical opinions.

Aldis, a U.S. national and permanent WHO staffer, was known among his colleagues for privately airing views critical of the Bush administration and its policy toward the WHO, particularly in relation to the U.S. government's alleged tendency to mix its commercial and public-health agendas.

Aldis reportedly chafed at WHO regional headquarters' instructions to receive representatives from U.S. corporations and introduce them to senior Thai government officials to whom the private company representatives hoped to sell big-ticket projects and products.

In recent months, major U.S. companies such as pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and technology company IBM have asked the WHO in Thailand to facilitate access to senior Thai officials. In turn, some senior WHO staff members have expressed their concerns about a possible conflict of interests, as the requested appointments were notably not related to any ongoing WHO technical-assistance program with the Thai government.

It's not the first time that the U.S. has played hardball with the WHO and Thailand. In 1998, when member nations proposed that the WHO be granted more power to monitor international trade agreements and their effects on global public health, particularly in relation to the access to patented medicines in developing countries, the U.S. government threatened to withhold funding to the organization.

Under that financial threat, the WHO has since largely refrained from commenting critically on the drug-patent issue. International and independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Oxfam and Medecins Sans Frontieres have filled the WHO's leadership vacuum on the issue by filling the information gap with highly critical research reports.

From the United States perspective, Aldis, and by association the WHO, had publicly sided with Thailand on the pivotal drug-patent debate during a crucial stage in the FTA negotiations. Washington reportedly hopes that the comprehensive deal it is pursuing with Thailand will serve as a template for other bilateral trade pacts in the region, including soon-to-be-negotiated deals with Malaysia and Indonesia.

Thai civil-society groups, meanwhile, have complained about the lack of transparency surrounding the negotiations, which caretaker Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has unilaterally conducted without consultations with parliament.

The U.S. and Thailand have in the past sparred over the Thai government's decision to use its WTO-approved compulsory licensing rights to produce certain generic antiretroviral drugs for HIV carriers and AIDS sufferers. In 2001, for example, Washington threatened retaliatory trade sanctions, including curbs on sensitive Thai export products, if the Thai government allowed the production of certain generic antiretroviral drugs.

Thai activists, meanwhile, have given certain U.S. pharmaceutical companies legal fits. In 2001, for instance, they challenged the legality of U.S. pharmaceutical company Bristol Meyer Squibb's patent over the antiretroviral drug didanosine, or DDI, because it was originally developed by a public

U.S. agency, the National Institutes of Health.

In 2002, a Thai court cited international statutes when it ruled that Thai HIV/AIDS patients could be injured by patents and had legal standing to sue if drug makers holding patents restricted the availability of drugs through their pricing policies.

The verdict was upheld in January 2004, and as part of an out-of-court settlement, Bristol Meyer Squibb decided to "dedicate the [DDI] patent to the people of Thailand" of that particular version of the drug by surrendering it to the Thai Department of Intellectual Property.

The dedication, however, did not carry over to third countries. Under the provisions of a U.S.-Thai FTA, future legal challenges to U.S.-held drug patents would be nearly impossible, Thai activists and international NGOs contend.

Lee's unexpected death has already engendered some serious soul-searching inside the WHO. Lee was widely lauded after his death, but his final legacy to the organization he served for 23 years is very much in doubt.

U.S. President George W. Bush said, "Lee provided tremendous leadership to the international community as it confronted the challenges of the 21st century." U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter all made similar eulogies to Lee's long commitment to improving global public-health standards.

Lee frequently denied allegations that U.S. political pressure influenced his decision-making, most notably perhaps during a recent television interview with the British Broadcasting Corp. However, it is just as likely that Lee will be remembered for the many times he caved to U.S. pressure on crucial public-health issues, frequently in areas where WHO positions and commitments required that he take a stronger stand, some WHO officials contend.

Moreover, the secretive way that Lee sometimes conducted WHO business, apparently in some instances at the United States behest, already has some officials inside the U.N. agency talking about the need for greater transparency and accountability under the next director general. "It will be very rough waters ahead for the new [director general]," said a Geneva-based WHO official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

As the United States strong influence over Lee comes into posthumous light, the selection process for his replacement will almost certainly be politicized along rich- and poor-country lines, and if the U.S. openly pushes its favored candidate, that divide could widen into a full-blown schism inside the traditionally cohesive organization. Those sharp lines are already emerging.

A report by a WHO-mandated independent commission recently recommended that as a general rule governments should avoid bilateral free-trade treaties that reduce access to medicines in developing countries. An annex to that report, signed by mainly Western experts who adhered to positions held by big pharmaceutical companies, highlighted the glaring differences in opinion emerging among WHO member states.

For its part, the U.S. has long advanced the argument that without strong intellectual-property protection, the pharmaceutical industry will not have the commercial incentive to conduct research and development for crucial new medicines.

However, Brazil and Kenya recently claimed that about 90 percent of total global health-related research and development of Western pharmaceutical companies went toward addressing the medical needs of about 10% of the world's population. Those two countries have since called on the WHO to

adopt systems for intellectual-property protection that would increase developing countries' access to health innovations and medicines.

WHO staffers say they resent what they view as the United States political agenda toward vital public-health concerns, ranging from reproductive-health issues to promoting good dietary standards.

At the 2004 World Health Assembly (WHA), the U.S. broke with the meeting's proposed resolution that reproductive and sexual rights should be considered human rights, and strongly protested the meeting's focus on the public-health risks of unsafe abortions. Lee had earlier that year held up a list of essential WHO-recommended medicines drafted by an independent expert committee for more than two months because of U.S. objections about two listed abortifacient drugs that could be used to induce abortions in emergencies.

The U.S. delegation to another recent WHA took issue with a WHO-proposed diet and health resolution, particularly concerning the acceptable level of sugar content in foods, which by the WHO's expert assessment would have cast U.S. fast-food and soft-drink companies in an unfavorable light. Lee famously bent to the U.S. objections and signed off on a significantly watered-down version of the original resolution.

U.S. interference with U.N. personnel and policy decisions, of course, isn't an entirely new phenomenon. The U.S. is the largest donor to the U.N. and by association to the WHO, and in light of the U.S.-inspired events in Bangkok, senior WHO representatives throughout the organization are likely to be more guarded when commenting on public health issues that Washington considers sensitive.

The Bush administration's tactics, often cloaked as reform measures, in reality aim to bring U.N. agencies like the WHO more in line with U.S. commercial and political interests.

At the WHO, at least, that process has come at the expense of the U.N. agency's stated mission, commitments and, perhaps most significant, its global credibility as an impartial and apolitical actor.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 372. Concurrent resolution recognizing the 50th Anniversary of the Interstate Highway System.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2012. An act to authorize appropriations to the Secretary of Commerce for the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for fiscal years 2006 through 2012, and for other purposes.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your courtesy in giving me a few extra minutes to get here.