

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

### IRAQ

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, today in Iraq we sadly find ourselves at the very point I feared when I opposed giving the President the open-ended authority to wage this war in 2002, an occupation of undetermined length and undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences in the midst of a country torn by civil war.

The American people have waited. The American people have been patient. We have given chance after chance for a resolution that has not come and, more importantly, watched with horror and grief at the tragic loss of thousands of brave young American soldiers.

The time for waiting in Iraq is over. The days of our open-ended commitment must come to a close. The need to bring this war to an end is here.

That is why today I am introducing the Iraq War De-escalation Act of 2007. This plan would not only place a cap on the number of troops in Iraq and stop the escalation; more importantly, it would begin a phased redeployment of United States forces with the goal of removing all United States combat forces from Iraq by March 31, 2008, consistent with the expectations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group that the President has so assiduously ignored.

The redeployment of troops to the United States, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the region would begin no later than May 1 of this year, toward the end of the timeframe I first proposed in a speech more than 2 months ago.

In a civil war where no military solution exists, this redeployment remains our best leverage to pressure the Iraqi Government to achieve the political settlement between its warring factions, that can slow the bloodshed and promote stability. My plan allows for a limited number of United States troops to remain as basic force protection, to engage in counterterrorism, and to continue the training of Iraqi security forces.

If the Iraqis are successful in meeting the 13 benchmarks for progress laid out by the Bush administration itself, this plan also allows for the temporary suspension of the redeployment, provided Congress agrees that the benchmarks have actually been met and that the suspension is in the national security interest of the United States.

The United States military has performed valiantly and brilliantly in Iraq. Our troops have done all we have asked them to do and more, but no amount of American soldiers can solve the political differences at the heart of somebody else's civil war, nor settle the grievances in the hearts of the combatants.

It is my firm belief that the responsible course of action for the United States, for Iraq and for our troops, is to

oppose this reckless escalation and to pursue a new policy. This policy I have laid out is consistent with what I have advocated for well over a year, with many of the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, and with what the American people demanded in the November election.

When it comes to the war in Iraq, the time for promises and assurances, for waiting and for patience, is over. Too many lives have been lost and too many billions of dollars have been spent for us to trust the President on another tired and failed policy that is opposed by generals and experts, Democrats and Republicans, Americans, and many of the Iraqis themselves.

It is time for us to fundamentally change our policy. It is time to give the Iraqis back their country. And it is time to refocus America's efforts on the challenges we face at home and the wider struggle against terror yet to be won.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. 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. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

### TRADE RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the U.S. trade agenda. There are a number of important items on this year's trade agenda, including reauthorization of Trade Promotion Authority for the President and reauthorizing our trade adjustment assistance programs for workers who are displaced by trade. I will speak on those priorities another day.

Today I want to focus on our trade relations with our neighbors in Central and South America. During my chairmanship of the Finance Committee, Congress passed implementing bills for trade agreements covering 12 countries. Out of these 12 countries, over half—7—are located in Latin America. I am pleased that Congress acted to strengthen our economic relations with Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, by implementing our trade agreements with these neighbors to the south. And I think we should all be pleased that these seven countries made it a priority to develop closer economic ties with us and to further commit themselves to transparency and the rule of law.

I hope that the current Congress will continue working to strengthen economic relations between the United States and Latin America. Fortunately, we already have a roadmap for

doing so. We have concluded free trade agreements with Peru and Colombia, and we are about to sign an agreement with Panama. It is up to this Congress to pass implementing legislation for these agreements. Failure to do so would only damage our relations with these important allies and embolden other southern neighbors who are increasingly hostile to the United States.

Moreover, by implementing our trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, and Panama, we would provide an important boost for U.S. exporters. During my time in the Senate, I have heard many of my colleagues complain that the global trade situation reflects an uneven playing field. To some extent, I agree. In too many cases, the duties imposed on U.S. exports by our trading partners are much higher than our duties. That is certainly the situation with Peru, Colombia, and Panama. Right now, almost all imports from those three countries enter the United States duty free. Ninety percent of the value of our imports from Colombia enter duty-free. With respect to Panama, it is over 95 percent, and with respect to Peru it is 97 percent.

On the other hand, our exports to these countries face significant duties. Colombia's tariffs generally range from 10 to 20 percent, while those of Peru range from 12 to 25 percent. After Panama acceded to the World Trade Organization in 1997 its tariffs averaged 8 percent, but since then Panama has raised tariffs on certain agricultural products. For example, Panama's tariff on pork—a major Iowa product—is currently 74 percent, while its tariff on chicken imports is 273 percent. Now that is what I call a one-way street.

This imbalance is largely the result of unilateral trade benefits that we extend to these nations. Panama gets duty-free access to our markets under the Caribbean Basin Initiative, while Peru and Colombia are eligible under the Andean Trade Preference Act. And all three are eligible under our Generalized System of Preferences.

The nonpartisan U.S. International Trade Commission, ITC, analyzed our trade agreements with Peru and Colombia. The ITC concluded that these agreements will help to level the playing field that is currently tilted against U.S. exporters.

Here is what the ITC has to say about our trade promotion agreement with Peru:

Given the substantially larger tariffs faced by U.S. exporters to Peru than Peruvian exporters to the United States, the TPA is likely to result in a much larger increase in U.S. exports than in U.S. imports.

The ITC goes on to state that the agreement will likely increase U.S. exports to Peru by 25 percent, while Peruvian exports to the United States will grow by 8 percent.

The ITC's analysis of our trade promotion agreement with Colombia draws similar conclusions. The ITC report states that:

Colombian exporters generally face substantially lower tariffs in the U.S. market