

time the Iraqi security forces take over.

If this body, in its “wisdom”—an oxymoron in this case—says pull out on such-and-such date, and the Iraqi security forces are not ready to take over, what would happen? Three things—all of them bad.

No. 1, the killing, sectarian violence between Shia and Sunnis would escalate. You would see many more thousands killed, as we would no longer be there to serve as a buffer and as adviser to prevent that from happening.

No. 2, the goal of al-Qaida, as expressed by Osama bin Laden and his No. 2 man, Ayman al-Zawahiri, to achieve the headquarters of the caliphate in the “land of the two rivers,” i.e., Baghdad, would be achieved. They would have a safe haven. They would have a safe haven from which they could train, recruit, perhaps even get back to turning on the dual-use facilities Saddam Hussein set up for turning out chemical or biological weapons.

Now, the third thing that would happen, which is a true disaster, would be the neighboring countries would have to come in to back up their co-religionists. If the Sunnis are being oppressed by the Shia, then the Sunni states will be ready, and they will come in. If they come in, Iran and its Shia partners are all ready to come in.

What happens then? We have a conflagration in the Middle East bringing in many countries in a region-wide war that will draw, unfortunately, perhaps hundreds of thousands of American troops to prevent the disaster from spreading, to support our friends in Israel.

General Petraeus has promised, in his confirmation hearings, that he will tell us if the new plan, the new rules of engagement—putting the Iraqi security forces out front, with American advisers continuing to supply American troops to go after the high-value targets, the radical Salafist jihadists of al-Qaida and other entities—we will continue to hunt them down so they do not overwhelm the Iraqi security forces.

General Petraeus will tell us. He should know by this summer if it fails. If it fails, he said he will tell us, and I would trust he would begin making such changes as are necessary, without tipping off the enemy what they are planning to do. The important thing is not telling the enemy what our timetable is.

I think it is perhaps illustrative to share with you some comments from an e-mail I received from a marine who has been in Iraq and who is going back. He was commenting on a timetable. He said: I haven't polled all of them. I don't speak for all of them, but I can tell you, a lion's share think a timetable is a disastrous idea. I don't know what possible benefit you can assess that would come from a timetable. Where is the help toward mission accomplishment?

He said: Iraqis understand that progress is being made. I think the

Iraqi forces are getting ready to take over and with our help should be able to do it sometime in 2007. But if we tell everyone exactly when that is going to be, it gets a lot easier for the merry mujahedin to claim victory, lay low, and then wreak havoc when the coalition packs up shop.

This particular marine said: I'm not wild about going back to Iraq, but I would sure as heck rather do that than essentially invalidate everything we've done to date by leaving too early and inviting chaos.

That is the choice. Does a political timetable give Members cover back here? Maybe. But I have even heard that ridiculed. I have heard that ridiculed. I ask this body to strike the language, let General Petraeus run the war, let him pursue every avenue to assure Iraq is stable and secure. He and the President have said, if it does not work, we will change policy. But let's give it a chance to work.

Mr. President, I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues and yield the floor.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2007

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1591, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1591) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Cochran amendment No. 643 (to amendment No. 641), to strike language that would tie the hands of the Commander-in-Chief by imposing an arbitrary timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, thereby undermining the position of American Armed Forces and jeopardizing the successful conclusion of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, before my colleague from Missouri, Senator BOND, leaves the floor, I wonder if I might just engage him in a colloquy for just a moment.

Mr. BOND. Sure.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to speak about agriculture disaster provisions in the emergency supplemental bill. We had some people on the Senate floor yesterday questioning whether they are valid, whether they are necessary provisions to help family farmers. I noted the Senator from Missouri was a cosponsor of mine, as we worked together to put the agriculture disaster program in the emergency supplemental bill.

Let me make a point and then ask a question of my colleague from Missouri.

First of all, I appreciate very much his help. I know Missouri has been hit with a devastating drought and other weather-related disasters for family farmers. It has been the case in other parts of the country as well. We have been working for some long while just to reach out a helping hand to those farmers out there struggling who got hit with weather-related disasters to say: You are not alone. As is the tradition in this country when you get hit with a weather-related disaster and lose everything, this country wants to help you some. We help everyone around the world. It is time to take care of things at home. That is what this provision is about.

I ask the Senator from Missouri about his motivation for being a part of those of us who worked together to get this put in the emergency supplemental bill. I know he strongly supports it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from the Dakotas. Before he arrived on the floor, I made the case for it. The Senator asked about the situation in Missouri. I told them about the devastating ice storms. We have had a historic drought. What we need is a comprehensive national policy to deal with the problems and not just for the Dakotas or Missouri but for Colorado, Texas, Nebraska, Kansas, California—throughout this country—where people have been devastated by extreme weather conditions.

We have livestock producers who were hit the hardest. There is no safety net in place for livestock producers. They are not protected by crop insurance, the farm bill, or disaster protection under the USDA since the standard is crop loss and there were no crops to be lost in the middle of the winter in an ice storm. But the devastation is there.

This body and this Government came to the rescue of people who were absolutely wiped out by Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters. Well, the impact in the farm area is very severe. No, it is not the same as a hurricane, but the weather disasters have caused tremendous hardships and threaten to put many farmers under and destroy rural communities.

That is why I am very pleased to join with my colleague in urging this body to keep the agricultural disaster program, the relief we have not had for 3 years, in this bill.

I thank my colleague.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Missouri for his leadership on this issue as well.

Let me say that the Congress did help farmers in the gulf region who lost their crops. I understand we helped cities that were devastated and lost buildings and lives and so on. We also helped farmers who lost their crops.

My point is—and I think the point of the Senator from Missouri is—there is