

The issue is also one of the power of the Congress and the power of the President. Under the Constitution, Presidents may wage war. It is Congress that declares war.

As we know from studying the Constitution in elementary school, high school, college and university, there are approximately 200 conflicts, large and small, that we have been in since 1789 when the First Congress met in New York. In only five of those did Congress declare war, but it certainly gave support to a number of others through appropriations and through authorization.

But that power of the President to wage war is not a mandate to be Super Cop to the world at either the whim or the policy of the President. The question is: "Where is our vital interest?"

Usually the vital interest has been, in most of those 200 engagements, where the lives of citizens of the United States have been involved. Citizens of the United States are not being held captive in Bosnia and the lives of American citizens have not been involved.

We hear Members of the administration saying, "This is not going to be another Vietnam," even though one of the top negotiators at Dayton had a slip of the tongue in talking to a few of us and mentioned Vietnam in the place of where he meant Bosnia. Whether that is significant I leave to the psychoanalysts.

Our troops are on the ground to separate the warring parties, who now are tired, presumably, and want peace after 500 years of acrimony, war, and conflict based on ethnicity as well as on religion. What happens when those supposedly tired warring parties decide they do not want peace anymore and the American forces are in the middle, presumably trying to separate them? The American forces thankfully do have the power to respond, and to respond promptly.

But I worry when a President, any President, Republican or Democrat—and this is a not a new thought with me—does something in foreign affairs in an election year. We all agree that handling foreign affairs is, frankly, a lot easier than dealing with domestic policy and all the different factions there.

The lives of American military men and women are too valuable to be an election year photo opportunity. The President does not have the power to deploy troops anywhere on either whim or long-thought-out policy. It is the Congress that must face up to the issue as to whether the President has the right to deploy troops in the former Yugoslavia, primarily in Bosnia. I would suggest that the President does not have the right. He has not shown us that there is a vital interest in Bosnia for America.

Certainly there is a humanitarian interest. There are dozens of humanitarian interests where people are being butchered by their neighbors in the

same country, be it in Africa, be it in parts of Europe, be it in Asia. We cannot be, as I said earlier, Super Cop to the world. Congress needs to face up to this issue and not duck it as it has been ducking it for the last 2 weeks.

BLATANT POLITICAL DOCUMENTS SENT FROM THE WHITE HOUSE TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss an issue regarding a letter that President Clinton and Vice President GORE sent to a number of Federal employees. I was at a hearing last week on the space program and we were receiving testimony from the administrator, Mr. Dan Golden, and one of the members at that hearing brought up the subject of a letter that had been sent to NASA employees in his district that he found particularly offensive. I was very concerned about this particular issue, so I asked for a copy of this letter.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, when I saw this letter, I thought it was a hoax. I thought the President and the Vice President of the United States of America could never be so foolish as to send out to Federal civil service employees an openly and blatantly political document such as this, which is obviously in violation of statute. I had one of my staff call over to the White house to find out for sure, because I thought it was obviously a hoax, as to whether or not the White House had authorized this letter. I was very, very shocked to find out that this, indeed, did come out of the office of the President and was authorized by the Vice President's office.

The letter is entitled "An open letter to Federal employees, from President Clinton and Vice President Gore." It begins with a comment about how proud they are of the work force, and then it goes on to say some nice things about the very good work that our Federal employees do, but then it goes on to talk about the possibility of another Federal shutdown.

It says in the fourth paragraph: "You all know that the law under which most of the government is operating expires on December 15, and the debate that led to the November shutdown is not over," a very true and accurate statement. I agree with it.

Then it goes on to say: "We can't promise you that your jobs and your lives won't be interrupted again. Too much is at stake for America. If you are held hostage again, we know you would not want us to forfeit the Nation's future as ransom."

Mr. Speaker, I think this is an outrage that the President and the Vice President of the United States would send out such a blatantly political document to Federal employees. The Congress of the United States sent to the

President of the United States a continuing resolution to keep the Government open, and the President of the United States decided to veto that continuing resolution, and in him doing so, vetoing that legislation, he shut the Government down. It was quite apparent to me when I heard that he did not talk to the Speaker or the majority leader of the other body on their trip to Israel at all that he was very intent on not negotiating with our side and letting the government shut down.

Indeed, that was the real story behind that lack of dialogue on that trip to Israel, the fact that the President of the United States wanted to go ahead and shut the Government down, and then these two gentlemen have the nerve to turn around and send out such a politically blatant document to Federal employees. I am calling on the chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, the honorable and distinguished gentleman from Florida, [Mr. JOHN MICA] to hold hearings on this subject, because I have since discovered this is not the first time that this has happened. No other President in United States history has ever exploited the Federal work force for political advantage like this President has.

I have in my hands a document that came out of the White House, encouraging all Cabinet Members to solicit political donations from Federal employees, so this President has done it before. He has used his political office of the Presidency of the United States for his political gain. He is doing that again in this letter. I think it is wrong. No Republican President could ever get away with doing anything like this. If a Republican tried something like this, the Washington press corps would be up in arms, there would be calls for investigations, there would be hearings being held.

I am rising today in this House to call upon the Subcommittee on Civil Service to hold hearings on what this President and the Vice President of the United States are doing, politicizing our civil service work force. I could tell you that I have civil service employees in my district who got this letter and they were outraged.

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IMPRISONMENT IS NOT THE ANSWER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GONZALEZ] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, for all of us, this is a holiday season—a time for reflection and renewal. This should most of all be a time to think about possibilities—the possibilities of doing the best we can.

The other day I read a truly grim report: More than a million Americans are in prison. Last year, the rate of growth in prison population was the biggest ever.