Is my understanding of the agreement correct?

Mr. LUGAR. Senator MCCAIN is correct in his understanding of the agreement reached by our two Committees. While the Agriculture Committee has an interest in both agricultural weather research and freshwater aquaculture, Senator HARKIN and I acknowledge the Commerce Committee's concerns and will accommodate them. We will propose during the conference that section 230 and section 211 of the Senate-passed version of S. 1150 be stricken, and that language be inserted in lieu of these sections which only extends the authorization of appropriations for the two statutes through fiscal year 2002, without other changes to the existing laws.

Mr. HARKIN. I concur with the foregoing description of our understanding as well. As Senator LUGAR described, we will propose to drop the existing Senate provisions on aquaculture and weather activities, and to substitute in their place straight reauthorizations of the two acts that Senator MCCAIN mentioned.

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank the Senator very much for their cooperation on this matter.

Mr. HOLLINGS. I also extend my thanks to Senator LUGAR and Senator HARKIN for addressing our concerns.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate disagree to the amendment of the House, agree to the request for a conference, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate.

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

The Presiding Officer appointed Mr. LUGAR, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. COVERDELL, Mr. HARKIN, and Mr. LEAHY conferees on the part of the Senate.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT OF 1997

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 1173, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1173) to authorize funds for construction of highways, for highway safety programs, and for mass transit programs, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill with a modified committee amendment in the nature of a substitute (Amendment No. 1676).

Mr. CHAFEE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from the great State of Rhode Island.

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I am delighted that the Senator from Missouri is here. It is my understanding that he has an amendment he is prepared to present. I would just use this opportunity, before we start on the Senator's amendment, to urge all Senators to come with amendments.

We are ready to do business here. There are a host of amendments. As we know, under the ground rules, we are not taking up amendments that deal with financial matters, but there are a whole host of other amendments that do not deal with those particular subjects. We would certainly like to dispose of them. So I do urge all Senators who have amendments to come to the floor and bring them up.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. BOND addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my good friend from Rhode Island. Let me begin by saying it is high time. I am anxious for this bill to move forward. I am very pleased to be here today with my colleagues to talk about this very important highway and transportation legislation and to offer an amendment which I believe has been cleared on both sides.

Mr. President, this past October, November, I had the pleasure of working with our distinguished committee chairman, Senator CHAFEE, and the subcommittee chairman, and my good friend, Senator WARNER, and the ranking member, Senator BAUCUS, to forge an interim solution that produced a short-term extension for this vital highway and transportation legislation that provided necessary resources to make certain that the orange cones and barrels that signal highway construction underway would continue to drive drivers nuts and show them that progress is being made.

But as already has been pointed out on the floor numerous times over the last couple weeks, we only passed an extension, one that does expire. Let me tell my colleagues that getting agreement in passing the extension was not easy. However, it did give us an idea of the complexity of what we have ahead of us.

We all know the importance and the role that transportation plays in our everyday lives and especially in our economy. We absolutely must improve upon the existing infrastructure—that is, the roads, the bridges, the transportation systems—and determine better ways to meet our transportation needs. That is why I worked with the distinguished chair and ranking member and the subcommittee leaders to produce the bill that is now pending.

I am very pleased to support and urge the adoption of that measure. As Senator CHAFEE said yesterday, this bill was reported unanimously out of committee—I repeat, unanimously out of committee. This happened because the bill, called ISTEA II, builds our new policy solidly on our commitment to the concrete and asphalt reality that roads and bridges are and will continue to be the foundation of our transportation system.

Mr. President, for me and for the people of my State of Missouri, highways are not an academic debate. They are a matter of life and death. All of us have heard the statistics about how our inadequate highways contribute to 114 deaths on our Nation's highways each day. Missouri's highway fatality rate is above the national average. I am reminded of these tragedies every time I go home. Every time I travel to a new part of the State, they have lost someone or several people on the highways.

Missouri has roads designated as part of the National Highway System that have no shoulders. We have two-lane roads carrying traffic meant for four lanes. These are real death traps, because somebody who is not familiar with the road, too often an out-of-State visitor to our State, makes a mistake and crosses over the center line with tragic consequences to them and to some other innocent party as well. And our bridge needs are perhaps greater than any other State.

I drove last Friday over the bridge at Hermann, MO. It is an eerie feeling driving over a highway bridge and looking down at the river below and seeing it through the bridge that you are driving over. Mr. President, that is not fun. That gets your attention. The people know that these bridges are not going to last forever.

Missouri has too many highways marked with white crosses along the side where people have died. The white crosses are in memory of the loved ones who will never return because of our inadequate highways.

Reauthorization of this measure, this highway transportation measure, is imperative. We must move forward. I know that maintaining our Nation's roads and bridges is not always a glamorous issue or undertaking. Too often we hear discussions about priority items that take our attention away. But as with the debate raging in education circles about improving our Nation's crumbling schools, so goes the equally important debate about improving our transportation infrastructure, our roads and highways and bridges. Here it is lives we are talking about.

Mr. President, reasonable people do have passionate differences. We see that every day on the Senate floor. All of us who were here in 1991 can recall that debate can get ugly over those differences, especially when money is involved. Overall funding has proven to be one of the difficult issues already, and the floor debates have not even started on formulas yet.

We all know there are tremendous challenges in meeting our aim of balancing the budget and our commitment to the American people to do so. I am ever mindful of and support achieving this goal. However, I do know the importance of the transportation infrastructure, the roads and highways and bridges and transportation needs of this country and the desire to provide for increased funding to meet those needs.

As a member of the Budget Committee, the Appropriations Committee and the Environment and Public Works Committee, I am committed and pledge my support in working to find a solution that will provide the increased funding necessary for transportation while maintaining our commitment to a balanced budget.

I expressed my appreciation to the majority leader, Senator LOTT, and to our Budget Committee chairman, Senator DOMENICI, who are working together and working with us to provide the resources we need to put the ''trust'' back in the highway trust fund.

I do support the highway money going for highways and transportation needs. My goal has always been to increase the size of the overall pie for highways and transportation and, as well, to increase Missouri's share. I will do everything possible to ensure that the State of Missouri gets a full, fair share back.

Maybe S. 404, which is known as the Bond-Chafee Highway Trust Fund Integrity Act, introduced with the distinguished chairman a year ago, is part of the overall funding solution. It does not take the highway trust fund off budget, but it does ensure that the ''trust'' is put back in the trust fund. That is a goal that I believe we all share.

I hope that negotiations on the overall funding level continue. If we can get a $28 billion highway program, let us do it. Let us work to achieve the allocation and the commitment of the highway trust fund moneys going back to highway trust fund purposes.

Mr. President, unfortunately, when we talk about Federal money and formulas, there are always clear-cut winners and losers. I know Missouri has been on both sides, too often on the losing side. But none of this goes away if we wait. I thank the majority leader and I thank the chairman and the ranking member for bringing this up.

Now, Mr. President, unless the chairman has other matters, I wish to introduce an amendment that I believe has been cleared on both sides.

AMENDMENT NO. 1677 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1676

(Purpose: To require that, in funding natural habitat and wetland mitigation efforts related to Federal-aid highway projects, a preference be given, to the maximum extent practicable, to the use of certain mitigation banks)

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk on behalf of myself, Senator BREAUX, and Senator LOTT and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND], for himself, Mr. LOTT and Mr. BREAUX, proposes an amendment numbered 1677.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Beginning on page 181, strike line 20 and all that follows through page 183, line 23, and insert the following:

esses. With respect to participation in a natural habitat or wetland mitigation effort related to a project funded under this title that has an impact that occurs within the service area of a mitigation bank, preference shall be given, to the maximum extent practicable, to the use of the mitigation bank if the bank contains sufficient available credits to offset the impact and the bank is approved in accordance with the Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use and Operation of Mitigation Banks (60 Fed. Reg. 58605 (November 28, 1995)) or other applicable Federal law (including regulations).

''(N) Publicly-owned intracity or intercity passenger rail or bus terminals, including terminals of the National Railroad Passenger Corporation and publicly-owned intermodal surface freight transfer facilities, other than seaports and airports, if the terminals and facilities are located on or adjacent to National Highway System routes or connections to the National Highway System selected in accordance with paragraph (2).

''(O) Infrastructure-based intelligent transportation systems capital improvements.

''(P) In the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, any project eligible for funding under section 133, any airport, and any seaport.

''(Q) Publicly owned components of magnetic levitation transportation systems.''.

SEC. 1235. ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECTS UNDER THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM.

Section 133(b) of title 23, United States Code (as amended by section 1232(c)), is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by striking ''and publicly owned intracity or intercity bus terminals and facilities'' and inserting '', including vehicles and facilities, whether publicly or privately owned, that are used to provide intercity passenger service by bus or rail'';

(2) in paragraph (3)—

(A) by striking ''and bicycle'' and inserting ''bicycle''; and

(B) by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', and the modification of public sidewalks to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.)'';

(3) in paragraph (4)—

(A) by inserting '', publicly owned passenger rail,'' after ''Highway'';

(B) by inserting ''infrastructure'' after ''safety''; and

(C) by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', and any other noninfrastructure highway safety improvements'';

(4) in paragraph (11)—

(A) in the first sentence—

(i) by inserting ''natural habitat and'' after ''participation in'' each place it appears;

(ii) by striking ''enhance and create'' and inserting ''enhance, and create natural habitats and''; and

(iii) by inserting ''natural habitat and'' before ''wetlands conservation''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following: ''With respect to participation in a natural habitat or wetland mitigation effort related to a project funded under this title that has an impact that occurs within the service area of a mitigation bank, preference shall be given, to the maximum extent practicable, to the use of the mitigation bank if the bank contains sufficient available credits to offset the impact and the bank is approved in accordance with the Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use and Operation of Mitigation Banks (60 Fed. Reg. 58605 (November 28, 1995)) or other applicable Federal law (including regulations).''; and

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, this amendment on wetlands mitigation banking has been cleared by both sides, and has been reviewed by EPA and the Corps who have no objection. It is, I believe, consistent with administration policy. It is supported by the Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and the National Wetlands Coalition. I believe this amendment is good for wetlands protection. It promotes private sector efforts to protect wetlands, and it saves money that can be used on highways or other authorized uses under this act. This is a win-win-win amendment.

Now, let me tell you what the amendment does. It simply provides, when highway projects result in impact to wetlands that require compensatory mitigation—a big word saying: If you take away a wetland here, you have to restore a wetland there so we do not have any loss of wetlands. That is required under current law. Here in this amendment we say that preference can be given, to the extent practical, to private sector mitigation banks.

The amendment mandates that the banks be approved in accordance with the administration's Federal guidance on mitigation banking issued in 1993. It requires that the bank be within the service area of the impacted wetlands.

Mitigation is usually accomplished by restoring or creating other wetlands. Isolated, on-site mitigation projects are expensive and often costly to maintain. Wetlands mitigation banks, on the other hand, are typically large tracts of land that have been restored as wetlands. A State department of transportation building a highway project which impacts wetlands near a bank buys ''credits'' generated from the bank based on the acreage quality of restored wetlands in order to satisfy its obligation to mitigate the harm to impacted wetlands.

The bank sponsor assumes full responsibility for maintaining the restored wetland site, and the State Transportation Department has fulfilled its mitigation requirement and can get on with the work on much-needed projects.

The amendment does nothing to change the mitigation requirement. It simply provides that mitigation banking will be the preferred alternative, where available, once mitigation requirements are found to exist.

In 1996, the Committee on Environment and Public Works held a hearing where witnesses from the administration, the private sector, the environmental community, and the scientific community spoke to the promise of mitigation banking as being an important instrument to protect wetlands and to do so with less expense and less red tape.

Robert Perciasepe, Assistant Administrator in the Office of Water at EPA,

testified to ''EPA's strong support for mitigation banking.''

In his testimony, he said, ''It's a unique win-win proposition. It's great for landowners because it makes the permitting process simpler and easier. . . . It's great for the environment because the consolidation of multiple mitigation projects into a single, large mitigation bank leads to greater environmental benefit in terms of the enhancement of wildlife habitat and the improvement of local water quality and flood control.''

I will add that as a matter of policy, we have a great opportunity with mitigation banking to protect wetlands by making wetlands protection a profitable private enterprise.

This effort is supported by the Missouri and Ohio Departments of Transportation and by AASHTO. Let me quote for you a September 1997 letter from the Director of the Ohio Department of Transportation:

> ODOT's costs for onsite mitigation have ranged as high as $150,000 per acre, when cost of design, real estate, construction and mitigation monitoring are combined. These costs are not out of line with the high-end costs experienced by many other DOTs around the country. Our lowest costs for onsite mitigation have generally exceeded $35,000 per acre. The cost of banking, in our experience, has ranged from around $10,000 to $12,000 per acre and includes all of the above cited cost factors. This equates to about one-quarter the cost of our average onsite mitigation.

The States of Florida and Illinois, in the Chicago area, have already had a similar experience.

This savings is significant and it can be achieved because of specialization and economies of scale. As a result, less federal highway money is spent on mitigating impacts to wetlands, and more federal highway money is made available for highway construction.

Many agree that mitigation banks, approved in accordance with Administration guidance, will have a greater long term rate of success in protecting wetlands because: (1) they are in the business of wetlands protection and have the expertise; (2) banks are easier to regulate and be held accountable; and (3) because there is more time and flexibility for a bank to identify and procure high quality wetlands.

I appreciate the assistance of the chairman, Senator CHAFEE, and Senator BAUCUS with this amendment.

Again, this is good for the environment and the efficiencies will permit more of our precious highway dollars to be spent on highways. I urge the adoption of this bipartisan amendment.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I wish to express my support for an amendment to the Federal highway bill that is simple and straightforward.

The amendment improves the environment and it saves federal highway dollars—two worthy goals.

The amendment establishes a preference for the use of wetlands mitigation banks to offset impacts to wetlands caused by the construction of highways funded under the federal highway program.

The amendment is not a mandate. It provides only that mitigation banking is the preferred alternative for mitigating wetlands impacts where there is a bank in the area of the highway project.

The amendment is an incentive-based strategy for environmental protection that enjoys bipartisan support. Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle know that this is the only real way to achieve compliance.

The amendment is sponsored by my friends and colleagues Senators CHRISTOPHER ''KIT'' BOND and JOHN BREAUX.

Mitigation banking refers to a large wetlands restoration effort where a ''bank'' of wetlands, usually 100 acres or more, is undertaken to compensate in advance for future wetlands losses from nearby development. The best sites for restoration of wetlands are often lands that used to be wetlands but were drained in order to plant crops. Mitigation bankers take a number of steps, such as breaking up drainage tiles, in order to reintroduce water to the site. Sometimes mitigation bankers replant native species, but often existing seed banks revegetate the land naturally once the water has been restored. Before long, a large, fully functioning wetlands ecosystem has been reestablished. Under federal guidelines, ''credits'' are generated based on the acreage and quality of the restored wetlands. The credits may then be sold to those who must restore wetlands to make up for those they have been allowed to disturb in order to build their school, office park, or other nearby project.

In the context of highway construction, mitigation banking works as follows: a state department of transportation building a highway project that affects wetlands near a mitigation bank may buy credits from the mitigation bank. The state DOT fulfills its mitigation requirement by purchasing sufficient credits from the bank to offset the loss of wetlands from the project, and the bank sponsor assumes full responsibility for maintaining the restored wetlands site.

Of course, the current federal highway program already allows federal funds to be used to mitigate adverse effects on wetlands caused by highway construction. But small, isolated, onsite mitigation projects are expensive and costly to maintain given the many small wetlands affected by a typical new highway project. In contrast, mitigation banks consolidate small, isolated wetlands mitigation efforts into large, high quality, diverse wetlands habitat. As a result, mitigation banks provide greater environmental benefits than piecemeal mitigation.

The Bond-Breaux amendment provides simply that mitigation banking will be the preferred alternative for wetlands mitigation efforts paid for with federal highway money where there is a bank in the area of a highway project. Banks must be approved under the federal guidance on mitigation banking.

In addition to benefiting the environment, use of mitigation banks will save federal highway dollars that can be made available for more highway construction. Experience has clearly demonstrated that private mitigation bankers can restore high quality wetlands at significantly less cost than state departments of transportation, as my colleague from Missouri has pointed out.

This amendment is supported by the Corps of Engineers, EPA, the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials, and numerous state departments of transportation. Even my own State of Mississippi believes this is a smart environmental idea and a smart highway idea.

It doesn't surprise me that this amendment is sponsored by the Senator from Missouri, Mr. BOND, Senator BOND's creative mind has produced an innovative answer to this thorny environmental policy. All Americans know the value of wetlands and recognize the contributions of an effective transportation infrastructure. Mr. BOND has found a way to balance the problems and provide a smart solution.

Mr. BOND has provided a win-win solution. His amendment encourages the investment of private sector resources and technology in wetlands restoration. It establishes a policy that rewards doing the right thing for the environment. I congratulate the Senator for his foresight, good judgment, and leadership.

I am also not surprised to see the Senator from Louisiana, Mr. BREAUX, joining Senator BOND in sponsoring this amendment. I citizens of Louisiana know what wetlands are because most of their state is classified as one. They know this type of public policy is a smart way to do highway business. I also commend my friend from Louisiana for his leadership on this amendment.

Mr. President, in closing, this is an excellent amendment that will save federal highway dollars, benefit the environment, and allow federal highway projects to go forward more quickly and with more certainty. It has my strong support, and deserves that of my colleagues.

Mr. CHAFEE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWNBACK). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I commend the Senator from Missouri for this amendment. It is an excellent one. What it will do is have a wetland of a larger size than would be under normal conditions. When they do damage to a wetland, they create a new wetland next to the highway. To have it in the so-called mitigation bank is a far superior way of operating, and I commend the Senator.

The amendment will improve the mitigation that is done to offset the

loss and degradation of wetlands as a result of highway projects. We have suffered unacceptable wetlands losses—more than half of the estimated 220 million acres that existed when the nation was founded have been lost.

Transportation has unintended but negative consequences on the nation's wetlands. The original ISTEA recognized this by establishing wetlands mitigation as an eligible expense of a State's highway construction funds. Mitigation banking is an innovative concept that allows a person who wishes to fill a wetlands to compensate for that loss by obtaining credits representing positive wetlands function generated at a nearby site. It is the perfect example of a forward-looking environmental policy that offers more bang for the buck.

With respect to highway construction, mitigation banking offers several potential advantages over on-site, individual mitigation. A mitigation bank, unlike on-site mitigation, can consolidate wetlands compensation where it is most ecologically beneficial. Moreover, mitigation banking helps to achieve the goal of ''no net loss'' of the Nation's wetlands by providing additional opportunities to compensate for impacted wetlands. So I thank Senators BOND and BREAUX again for their work on this.

We are prepared to accept the amendment.

Mr. BAUCUS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, we all want to protect wetlands, and we know when highways are constructed that wetlands are often in jeopardy. It is in the law that when a highway is constructed which does jeopardize a wetland, an offset must be provided for; that is, the developer or the contractor has to find some other way to enhance or improve the wetland.

This is another step in that direction. It is a step toward greater efficiency, namely, where someone may enhance, develop a wetland, get credit for it, and the contractor comes along and goes to the bank which already has the credit for the wetland. It is a much more efficient process for getting the job done. I compliment the Senator from Missouri for coming up with this idea. We accept the amendment.

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I urge the adoption of the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate? If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1677) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote by which the amendment was agreed to.

Mr. CHAFEE. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. BREAUX. Mr. President, I thank the Senate for accepting the Bond-Breaux amendment to S. 1173. It has been my privilege to cosponsor the proposal with the Senator from Missouri, Senator BOND, and to continue our work together on wetlands-related issues.

I express my deepest appreciation to the Majority Leader, Senator LOTT, and to the Committee Chairman and Ranking Member, Senator CHAFEE and Senator BAUCUS, for their support. I also look forward to working with them on this issue as the intermodal surface transportation bill advances through Congress.

The Bond-Breaux amendment proposes to establish a reasonable, responsible wetlands and natural habitat mitigation policy as part of the federal aid highway program.

Our language says that mitigation banking shall be the preferred means, to the maximum extent practicable, to mitigate for wetlands or natural habitat which are affected as part of a federal-aid highway project and whose mitigation is paid for with federal funds.

The amendment establishes three criteria which are to be met in order to use a mitigation bank: first, the affected wetlands or natural habitat are to be in a bank's service area; second, the bank has to have enough credits available to offset the impact; and third, the bank has to meet federally-approved standards.

The Bond-Breaux amendment does not mandate the use of mitigation banks nor does it say they shall be the sole means or the only method used to mitigate for wetlands or natural habitat affected by a federal-aid highway project.

Mitigation banks can offer advantages when built and operated responsibly, including achieving economies of scale and providing larger, higher-quality diverse habitat.

Again, I'm pleased to join with Senator BOND in sponsoring the amendment, pleased that it has been accepted as part of S. 1173, and appreciative of the support extended for it by Senator LOTT, Senator CHAFEE and Senator BAUCUS.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, again, I thank the Senator from Missouri. I see no other individual prepared to offer an amendment. I urge Senators to come to the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask that I be allowed to speak out of order for 20 minutes.

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

THE IRAQI CRISIS

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my hope that the agreement reached by Secretary Annan in Iraq results in the end of a conflict that has plagued the international community over the past seven years—the failure of Saddam Hussein to live up to the terms that he agreed to following the invasion of Kuwait and his defeat in the Gulf War.

If Saddam has truly experienced a change of heart and has decided to abandon the production and concealment of weapons of mass destruction, this agreement is a milestone; if this is just one more ploy to evade the destruction of his arsenal, then we remain on course for a showdown with Iraq.

We all know Saddam Hussein's record. He invaded the sovereign nation of Kuwait. He used chemical weapons against Iran and against his own people. He used women and children as human shields to protect himself and his weapons of mass destruction. He is both a coward and a menace—and that is a dangerous combination.

At this time it is impossible to judge whether this deal will truly permit the UN weapons inspectors full and unfettered access. UNSCOM inspectors have always insisted that they need to be able to follow a trail wherever it leads them. They are not seeking access to a certain category of sites—they just need freedom to track the evidence. If this agreement permits them to do this and allows them to use whatever techniques are necessary, then the agreement is a step forward. The inspectors do not seal off buildings because they are ''cowboys,'' they do it because the Iraqi's were moving equipment out the back door as they entered the front.

It would have been prudent for the Administration to have studied the plan, and clarified the details before it offered its support. But, as is the case with the lack of information to the Senate on the Administration's plan to bomb Iraq, prudence was apparently too much to expect.

While I am reserving judgment on the Secretary General's agreement until the terms have been thoroughly explained, one positive immediate effect is that it has created a pause in the crisis. The Congress has a responsibility to the American people, and especially the men and women serving in our armed forces, to ensure that the Administration has clear objectives and a coherent policy in regard to Iraq. The use of air strikes against Iraq may have been averted in this instance, but given Saddam's track record of lies and deceit, I do not believe that this is the last time that we will be forced as a nation to confront him.

We all witnessed the Administration's public relations offensive with Cabinet officials holding town hall meetings around the country to build public support for limited air strikes. Through these forums it has become painfully clear that the Administration