

in the past. The reason I bring this story to the floor, Mr. President, is oftentimes people will say, "Americans don't want to risk the lives of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines in a military operation." In 1996, 19 Americans were killed in the Khobar Towers bombing and they died as a result of the anger directed at the American military presence in the gulf. Indeed, the terrorist bombings of U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, in which 12 Americans were killed, were directed by Osama bin Laden, a man who had been stripped of his Saudi citizenship for financing Islamic militants in Algeria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Today, bin Laden remains at large and remains a significant threat not just to people of the world but especially to American citizens around the world. The reason he is a threat and the reason he has killed not just Americans but Kenyans is we are deploying a military operation in Saudi Arabia. It is our presence that he objects to. It is our presence and our military strategy that is being met with his terrorist activities.

Again, I raise these points because I think we have a tendency to forget the price that we paid for our policy in Iraq. We forget the price that we are paying today for our policy in Iraq. This policy has been described as containment. It has been expensive and, in my judgment, it has failed. Recent events may indicate that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The Iraqi people may be closer to their freedom than at any time in years. America must be prepared for sudden change in that country.

The Iraqi people are suffering. The Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein is among the most brutal and repressive in the world. Americans can be proud of the leading role we are playing in confronting this dictatorship. Last fall President Clinton and Congress took a big step towards delegitimizing Saddam by passing and signing the Iraqi Liberation Act. The world was placed on notice that America wanted to see Saddam's dictatorship gone and would work with democratic opposition groups to attain that goal.

The administration and our British allies took another big step in December with the Desert Fox airstrikes. By attacking the underpinnings of Saddam's power, the Special Republican Guards and the intelligence services, Operation Desert Fox reduced Saddam's ability to terrorize his people and showed Iraqis we and our allies were truly opposed to Saddam in a way previous air campaigns had not done.

Saddam responded to Desert Fox by undertaking regular violations of the northern and southern no-fly zones, trying to entice allied aircraft into air defense missile ambushes. The allied counter has been highly effective. Rather than simply chasing retreating Iraqi aircraft, United States and allied warplanes have been attacking the Iraqi air defense missile and radar and

communication sites, which would support such ambushes. Almost every day so far in 1999 we have attacked some Iraqi air defense installation in response to a no-fly zone violation. The effectiveness and readiness of Saddam's air defense forces decline daily. Equally important, the complete impotence of Saddam's military relative to the allies is made plain to all Iraqis. In military terms, the Iraqi regime has never looked weaker.

Last weekend, the world saw signs of a political rally to match the decline of Iraq's military. The Grand Ayatollah of the Shiites, the spiritual leader of 65 percent of Iraqis who are Shiite Muslims, was murdered Thursday night with two of his sons. According to press reports, the Grand Ayatollah had reportedly opposed the regime's directive to all Muslims that they pray at home rather than at Friday services in mosques. Opposition sources said the Grand Ayatollah had preached against the regime and had blamed it for the misery of Iraqis. Perhaps for these reasons, Shiite Muslim Iraqis suspected the government of the crime and took to the streets in Baghdad and in several southern cities.

The Iraqi opposition groups claim scores, perhaps hundreds, of Iraqis were killed in the government's harsh response. Two other Shiite leaders of international reputation have also been mysteriously murdered in southern Iraq within the last year. The murder of the Grand Ayatollah, coming on these earlier murders and in the background of longstanding Shiite resistance to Saddam's regime, sparked demonstrations and violent government responses in Baghdad and several other cities, according to opposition reports. By Sunday night, the regime had apparently quelled the demonstrations. The human cost and the extent of continuing Shiite hostility to Saddam's regime are simply not known to us, but the episode demonstrates the Iraqi government's lack of legitimacy in the eyes of its people, as well as the extent to which Saddam would go to suppress any opposition. The episode reveals a weakening Iraqi regime lashing out in an increasingly desperate effort to maintain power. When dictatorships act this way, it may signal that their end is near.

But when the end comes, it may come quickly. The question will be, Is America prepared for the end? If we have done our homework on the various Iraqi opposition groups and actively supported the groups which qualify under the criteria set forth in the Iraqi Liberation Act, we will be well positioned to help Iraq make the transition to democracy. However, if we delay full implementation of the act and take a wait-and-see posture toward the opposition, we should not be surprised if our influence on events in post-Saddam Iraq is slight. Similarly, if we do not have humanitarian supplies ready to be forwarded to Iraq as soon as Saddam falls, and if we do not

have international consensus for forgiving the debts of a post-Saddam Iraq, we should not be surprised to see him replaced by another hostile dictator.

Mr. President, we have a vital national interest in Iraq's future. The lives of young Americans are invested there—our honored dead from the gulf war, as well as from the terrorist attack on Khobar Towers. The valor of our young warriors—now being demonstrated daily in the skies over Iraq—is invested there.

Tens of thousands of soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines have spent months of their lives on deployments to the Persian Gulf and to Turkey in support of the U.S. policy to contain Iraq. We have invested billions of dollars supporting this policy: \$1.36 billion on deployments in fiscal year 1998 alone, and \$800 million so far in fiscal year 1999.

The American people have made this heavy investment and they have the right to a good return—a democratic Iraq at peace with its neighbors and with its people, so we can bring our troops, ships, and planes home for good. To attain this return, we must be ready for an internal crisis in Iraq, which could occur sooner than we expect.

Mr. President, on later occasions, I intend to come to the floor to describe why I believe a policy other than containment is necessary. I understand there are people who are very suspicious and very guarded in their assessments of our success. But I ask them merely to look at previous examples of where the United States of America has been successful in the face of considerable skepticism about our ability to get that done.

In addition, Mr. President, we have, as I have tried to outline here, a considerable military investment and a risky operation going on today that puts every single one of these men and women, their health, safety, and well-being at risk, and we should not and dare not take that for granted.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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