

foreign military financing, and it is my understanding that the State Department officials have informed some committee staff that Colombia's share of those funds will be around 36 to \$37 million.

All told, that is another \$100 million in additional military aid for Colombia. Mr. Speaker, that is more money than the State of Massachusetts will receive under the supplemental for critical homeland security priorities. It is more than most States will receive.

In Massachusetts, communities are laying off police, firefighters, and other emergency first responders. Dozens of our cities and towns have critical vacancies because many of our local police, our State police, our sheriffs, firefighters, and medical staff have been called to active duty and are right now serving in Iraq.

I have been told that there is just not enough money to help places like Seekonk or Worcester or Southborough fill these critical vacancies to keep our families safe; but apparently there is plenty of cash for Colombia.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing that Colombia needs that cannot be handled through the regular authorization and appropriations process. Indeed, just last month on February 12, this Congress approved over \$500 million for Colombia for fiscal year 2003, \$400 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative, and another \$99 million in foreign military financing.

For fiscal year 2004, the President has asked for more than \$700 million for Colombia in the foreign operations and defense appropriations bills. Those bills will begin moving through subcommittee shortly after Congress returns from our April recess.

U.S. military and other aid for Colombia has been approved and is in the spending pipeline ready to go. On Monday, when he sent up the supplemental request, President Bush asked the Congress "to refrain from attaching items not directly related to the emergency at hand."

Mr. Speaker, Colombia falls into that category. These requests for Colombia are unrelated to the needs of our troops and our missions in Iraq and South Asia and unrelated to meeting the needs of our own homeland security; and I call upon the administration to withdraw the request for Colombia from this supplemental, and if that fails to happen, I ask the Committee on Appropriations to eliminate those requests and shift those resources to help our States and our communities meet critical hometown security priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Colombia in February. I traveled to several sites throughout the country. I met with local military commanders, religious leaders, governors, mayors, labor leaders, school teachers, displaced families, indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, lawyers, the magistrates of the constitutional court, members of the Colombia Government and U.S. embassy

staff. I was also in Colombia 2 years ago, and the difference is striking.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, today the human rights situation is worse. The violence has increased. There is less political space for people to organize, speak out or voice alternatives to official policy. The country is increasingly militarized; and there is little support for basic economic development, unless it comes from other countries or the U.N.

The 40-year-old civil war in Colombia is dirtier and uglier than ever and shows no signs of ending anytime soon. The nature of the U.S. role in that war has changed. We are now more deeply involved in a counterinsurgency than ever before. Americans have died and are being held hostage by guerrilla forces. The Colombian military continues to work with awful right-wing paramilitary forces.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to see American men and women dying in a war in Colombia where the Colombian military is still reluctant to engage directly insurgent and paramilitary forces. I think it is a mistake for the United States to escalate its military involvement in Colombia.

Some of my colleagues may disagree, but at the very least, this escalation deserves a full debate. We must not allow such a dramatic increase in our military involvement to pass without comment and votes. Congress must assert its proper role.

Withdraw the requests for Colombia in this supplemental. Put that money to better use by supporting our police and firefighters here at home.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor with an issue that I

feel the Members of this House should think about.

The BBC carried a story on March 27 saying that there was proof of biological weapons found. They found protection suits, gas masks; and officials argued that these precautions were not to counter the threat of coalition attacks, as the Iraqis would know that the United Kingdom and U.S. forces in the gulf do not possess chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Hoon, who is the Secretary in the British Government, conceded that the discovery of the suits was obviously not conclusive proof that Iraqi forces were set to use chemical or biological weapons, but he added, "It's clearly indicative of an intention, otherwise why equip his own forces to deal with a threat which he knows we do not have?"

I just received an e-mail message from one of my friends in the British House of Lords who said to me there was a news story on the BBC this morning about the U.S. administration saying they may be prepared to use nonlethal chemical weapons in Iraq in an urban situation where it would be preferable to stun people rather than kill them. Now I do not know how we put those two stories together. We think the Iraqis are getting ready to do something; but the BBC, the very same, carries the story which we will never find in an American newspaper or on American television that we are talking about using chemical weapons.

My correspondent went on to say this would be illegal; they are very nasty substances and can kill children. They would be effective against military forces equipped with even rudimentary gas masks. I am sure my colleagues will be speaking out against such a thing. However, it might help them to know that I am hoping to ask our government what action they would take in such a situation.

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"My party will certainly call for the U.K. troops to cease work with American forces if they use illegal chemical weapons, even nonlethal ones. If it happens during the Easter recess, we would call for a recall of Parliament to debate it."

Mr. Speaker, I bring this to the floor because the media in this country has done a terrible job reporting the war. They give us one side, they are all embedded inside our military, and they get whatever they are supposed to put out about what is going on. They are not looking broadly across the horizon at what is happening.

The Washington Post carried a story today that the American people are so dissatisfied with the American press that the number one hit on the Internet is Al Jazeera, a Qatar television station that provides another point of view. Americans are trying to find out what the truth is.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know, I cannot make head nor tail out of this. I looked