

Karzai, is fearful of leaving Kabul. Again, progress has not been measured, but rather the lack of progress is obvious; and we have been there 18 months.

Earlier, my colleague referred to General Shinseki. He had the courage to speak his mind. He had the courage to tell the American people. And by the way, I think we all agree, I think there is unanimity among us that Iraq and the world is better off without Saddam Hussein. That is not at issue here. We have had a changing policy in regard to Iraq dating back for years, including, by the way, in the 1980s, when this President's father, George Herbert Walker Bush, took Saddam Hussein off the terrorist list as Vice President in the early 1980s, in conjunction with, and, obviously, under the direction of President Reagan, installed an embassy in Baghdad, supplied agricultural credits in the amounts of billions of dollars to the Iraqis, and were providing intelligence from our military to the Iraqi military in terms of benefiting in their war with Iran.

I think we have to say it, they were fully aware that the Iraqis at that point in time were using chemical weapons. They knew. They knew what was happening in northern Iraq against the Kurds.

□ 2350

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, that just goes to show that the interests of the United States at that time were deemed to be such that we could have that kind of diplomatic relationships with Saddam Hussein and the government in Iraq. The present Secretary of Defense was part of that, was in Iraq and trying to do business with Saddam Hussein.

The question is what caused that change? Was it really in the interest of the United States in terms of our defense and imminent danger to the United States to attack Iraq? That is a question that needs to be answered because it is going to inform us and instruct us where we are going from here, whether it is Iran, Syria, North Korea, whether it is the kind of policies that are going to come forward on Iraq itself. This is the kind of thing that needs not just an emphasis but needs explanation.

If we are going to have a policy worthy of the legacy of this Nation's triumph of democracy, we cannot simply assert it on behalf of other people, particularly in a place like Iraq which has never known it and whose entire history since World War I has been nothing but a division of the spoils among Western nations.

Mr. Speaker, I simply want to indicate to my colleagues, and I hope that we will have a dialogue in the future, particularly with those who have different views as to where we should be going and what we have accomplished to this point, or what we have failed to accomplish to this point, because it is the only place that the American people

are going to get any kind of a dialogue like that. That is what this House is all about. This is the people's House. You cannot appear on this floor except by way of election. You can be appointed to the United States Senate; you cannot be appointed to the House of Representatives. This is the people's House. We come up for election, as my wife says, every other year, not every 2 years. You can have a driver's license longer than you can have a license to be on this floor, and that is as it should be because it was the intention of the Founders of this Nation that the people in this country have the opportunity to decide who will represent them here against the House of Lords on the other side of the building.

I would indicate that I will be coming back to the floor, and I hope to be joined by others because we do not intend to let this issue slide. We do not intend for anybody to get over this or get by it.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Or ride it out. Mr. Speaker, nobody is going to ride it out.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Not while we have the opportunity and obligation as Members of the House of Representatives to speak out on behalf of the people of this Nation.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I have been here just 5 years. I have often heard of the gentleman's eloquence and passion, and he has proven it tonight with great glory.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, let me just close with an observation. It is my understanding that sometime this week we could very well be considering a proposal for prescription drug benefits. I juxtapose that with a headline that I noticed today, and I guess it must have been in the aftermath of Under Secretary Wolfowitz's testimony before the Committee on Armed Services where it was concluded that there was a probability that a substantial American presence would be required in Iraq for a decade and that the cost to the American people would be \$54 billion a year.

I ask my colleagues and those that are watching us to reflect for a moment on the cost to the taxpayers and the reality of the deficit that we are facing far into the future and at the same time the needs of our seniors to have a genuine, significant, prescription drug benefit so they can live their lives with dignity and a sense that they are going to be treated as they should.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. And that they are not under siege.

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) has framed the issue very well. There are many things we need to be talking about regarding the post-conflict situation in Iraq: how to secure it properly because security is a huge issue; and how to bring not just democracy to the people of Iraq but the institutions of democracy, free press, free speech, a noncorrupt judicial system.

The gentleman talks about the need for a full disclosure by the President of the costs of the commitment, the challenges and the time line that we face in Iraq.

As we close tonight, I cannot think of a better request we can make of the President, to tell the American people and the Congress what we will be facing in Iraq. If the people do not know, they will not support it. And if times get tough, and they have been, 17 people have died in Iraq since hostilities have supposedly ended.

Mr. DELAHUNT. The number I understand now is 43 young Americans have died since the end of the formal phase of combat.

Mr. HOEFFEL. It is staggering. We need a full description and a full setting-forth of the challenge by the President. I thank the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT).

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. One closing remark, I do not think the parents and families of the young people who have died make any differentiation between formal and informal. I think those deaths are devastating regardless of the timing associated with it.

CORRECTION TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2003, AT PAGE H5643

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I offer a resolution (H. Res. 284) and ask unanimous consent for its immediate consideration in the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the resolution.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 284

Resolved, That the following Members be and are hereby elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

Committee on Agriculture: Mr. Neugebauer.

Committee on Resources: Mr. Neugebauer.

Committee on Science: Mr. Neugebauer.

Committee on Small Business: Mr. McCotter.

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

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid upon the table.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. JEFFERSON (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Ms. KILPATRICK (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.