

The United States stands shoulder to shoulder with the people of Jordan during this difficult time. We share their grief and their determination to bring the killers to justice.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 1 hour, with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

The Senator from Idaho.

116TH BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM IN IRAQ

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, tomorrow and through the weekend, we will be celebrating Veterans Day. I thought it was appropriate that I come to the Chamber this morning for two purposes. First, as chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the Senate, I have had the distinct pleasure of working with the VA and working with veterans across this country over the last year to not only provide them the services they need to improve their lives but to recognize the changing scene of veterans health care and the new veterans that are being created out of the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan and the kind of care and service those brave young men and women will need as they return home, some of them certainly not as physically or mentally whole as we would like.

Because of their tremendous service to our country in the war on terrorism, I can say very proudly that this Congress and our committee and the Veterans' Administration have clearly stepped up to do what is right and appropriate in the recognition of the time-honored care we have provided for our veterans down through the decades and down through the conflicts in which America found itself, in the preservation of our freedom and the advancement of all peoples around the world.

Idaho played a unique role this year, and I am here today to talk about the Idaho National Guard 116th Brigade Combat Team that is now returning from service in Iraq. For the last 18 months, these brave men and women have made a tremendous sacrifice to be away from their families and friends to defend our Nation and work to build a stable and free Iraq. For that, I am extremely grateful to all of them.

It is important to remember that the soldiers of the National Guard are ci-

vilians first and soldiers second. They are our doctors and our business men and women, plumbers, farmers, teachers. Yet they have all answered their country's call to action during this time of need. The skills these civilian soldiers bring to the table have proven to be invaluable as our soldiers work side by side with the Iraqi people to restore the critical infrastructure, establish a thriving economy, and promote a free and prosperous system of government.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege, once again, to visit Iraq—it was my second time while we have been engaged there in the war on terrorism—fulfilling a promise I had made to the 116th as I and the delegation and the Governor saw them off now over a year ago. So I was extremely proud to be there and to see this phenomenally enthusiastic civilian soldier in his or her work area as they did what they do so very well in a very courageous and skillful manner.

These civilian skills not only were essential to provide the security for the Iraqi people, but they also provided the essential ongoing construction efforts. I was humbled to have that opportunity to meet with these fine young men and women on the battlefield in Iraq and to express the gratitude of the people of the State of Idaho and our Nation for these efforts.

I also have enormous respect for what they did, but what is phenomenal is the feedback we received from the Iraqi Government officials regarding the work of the 116th. As I say, these are unique soldiers. The Iraqi people saw that and understood that these were really civilians who had tremendous talents in civilian life, and they incorporated that not only in the protection and the soldiering that went on over there but in the rebuilding of the infrastructure about which I talked. These soldiers faced a very difficult and dangerous task of maintaining the peace and stability in some very hostile environments. Yet they continued their mission, and they handled it with tremendous honor.

The members of the 116th have spent 12 months in Kirkuk and other areas within that region. Their mission was to provide for the security of the people of Iraq against insurgents and terrorist attacks, establishment of self-reliant government institutions, and the reconstruction of the basic and critical infrastructure. Their two overriding missions were overseeing the successful national elections in January and the national referendum vote on October 15. Both of these missions were tremendously successful. We know about that. This is exactly what our President had proposed and laid out before us.

While Americans and Members of Congress are tremendously anxious about the war currently going on in Iraq, the reality is we are on schedule and on course to do exactly what we set out to do to help the citizens of Iraq in standing up for government,

providing a representative form of government, and stabilizing that area of the world. The 116th from Idaho, these tremendous civilian soldiers, participated in that, and I must tell you that in representing the largest deployment from the State of Idaho that has ever happened to our National Guard, we stand as Idahoans today tremendously proud of the work they did.

The good news is, they are coming home, and most of them will be home for Thanksgiving. We will be glad to see them back with their families and back in their communities and re-assuming their civilian lives and doing that not only for the Idaho National Guard but for all guardsmen and reservists around the country. As chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, working with the Secretary of the VA, holding hearings in Idaho and other places around the country, we want to make sure that this transition back into civilian life is as seamless as possible.

These are men and women who have been at war. To simply step out of a war zone and step into their community is not going to be an easy task. Yet that is exactly what a civilian citizen soldier does. Whether it is the Idaho 116th or whether it is the tens of thousands of other guardsmen, women, and reservists around the country, we owe them a phenomenal debt of gratitude for the work they have done.

You see, we have a system within our military that it is not just the active soldier who serves so well, but it is that citizen soldier, our friends and neighbors in our communities across the country, such as the 116th of Idaho, who continue to serve and, in a time of war, serve with honor and dignity.

As we celebrate Veterans Day tomorrow and this weekend, recognizing those who have stood in harm's way and in many instances have given their lives so our lives could be freer, let's remember those currently serving in Iraq, be it the active soldier or be it the Guard or Reserve, for they are all one and their missions are all the same. The 116th of Idaho Brigade Combat Team has made Idaho extremely proud.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

THE WAR IN IRAQ

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I want to express my appreciation for Senator CRAIG's comments. I think they are so appropriate as we approach Veterans Day tomorrow, November 11. As he said, it is important that we give gratitude to these soldiers. But it is also very important—maybe even more important—that this Senate and this Congress give our support to them, we back them up, we affirm them in the courageous service they are giving and not undermine what they are doing by thoughtless and unfair criticisms. That is what is on my heart today and I

want to talk about it a little bit. I think it goes to the core of our integrity and our personal self-discipline as Senators.

I have to say, with great respect, that politics on too many occasions has overridden our commitment in this Senate to the soldiers who serve on the battlefield. We are a free and open society. We value and protect free and public debate in our country, and in the Senate one has the freedom to say or write almost anything he or she desires, whether wise or foolish. To secure and maintain that freedom and our other freedoms, on many occasions we have sent our soldiers to battle hostile forces around the globe.

Over 1 million personnel have died in combat to preserve the freedoms and liberties we take for granted today. Young soldiers, volunteers, and draftees have been called over the years to defend the values and liberties our Nation cherishes. As Senators, we are a key part of the process by which this Nation authorizes hostilities and calls them up. If there is any maturity of judgment in us at all, we understand that such a decision, when we make it, is a grave one and we know the lives of our military personnel will be placed at risk when we send them out. History and common sense tells us so. Any Senator not understanding this is not fit for the office they hold.

It is my view that there is and are no glorious wars. All war is bad. The Lord did not want His children to fight. But I am resigned to the fact that, throughout history, human efforts to maintain peace at any price have failed and that the option of war at certain times becomes better than the alternatives.

Let me speak frankly about the war on terrorism. We in this Senate are not children led about like the Pied Piper of Hamelin by President Bush or Vice President CHENEY. We are not and were not ignorant concerning the situation we found ourselves in after 9/11. We cheered President Bush's strong and determined response to terrorism at that time, and even when he warned us it would be a long, protracted, and bitter struggle, which he said repeatedly, the Senate promptly authorized the attack on the Taliban, who oppressed their own people in Afghanistan and who harbored and provided training for al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden. This Senate supported the President's demand on Mullah Omar that the Taliban cease these training bases and turn over bin Laden or face military action. We supported that. And when Mullah Omar and his oppressors refused, the Senate supported military action against the Taliban. When the war went so well, virtually everyone was pleased and said it was a good and proper thing we had done.

We are proud of what is happening in Afghanistan today. We have soldiers there, as Senator CRAIG said, working directly with the people of Afghanistan to try to lift them up and give them a period of sunshine and peace, after dec-

ades of war. These good results happened, however, not because we voted to authorize force but because this Nation was able to call on great soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines to go into harm's way, facing what they had to know would be great danger, to execute the policy we voted for and that the President was authorized to execute.

The military action in Afghanistan went well. But make no mistake, we Senators knew the mission was dangerous and most predicted far more casualties than occurred in that effort. The credit goes to our military's brilliant tactics.

At this same time, Iraq was continuing its systematic, illegal, and unconscionable actions against its own people, against the United States, and against the United Nations—continuing violation of 16 U.N. resolutions. These resolutions in essence were a result of Iraq's plea for peace after the coalition forces ejected it from the nation of Kuwait. Surely this Nation has not forgotten that. Surely this Senate has not forgotten that. Surely we remember that Saddam's Iraq had, by surprise and brutality, attacked and occupied its peaceful neighbor Kuwait. At that time, with the United States in the lead, the coalition demanded that Saddam withdraw or face military force.

In 1991, he refused and, in a brilliant strike, our forces, under the command of General Norman Schwarzkopf, forcibly ejected Saddam's military from Kuwait and liberated that nation. Then Kuwait's was a responsible voice on the world scene, as it is today.

To stop the coalition forces from moving to Baghdad to remove him from office, Saddam made a series of agreements under the supervision of the United Nations. He did not keep them, of course. First he declared he had not lost the war but was in fact the victor. Such a statement was a clear indication of his plans to continue his drive to dominate that region and to lead a fight against the west. When a U.N. plan was developed to allow the sale of Iraq's oil so food could be made available to the Iraqi people, he cheated on the Oil for Food Program to rebuild his military and his personal palaces, leaving millions of his own people hungry.

He attacked his own people, brutally repressing the Shiites in the south and the Kurds in the north. He had earlier used poison gas, a weapon of mass destruction, against his own people, the Kurds. He effectively ejected U.N. inspectors and refused to provide assurance that he was not creating or was not in possession of weapons of mass destruction. He had previously promised not to possess or develop these weapons. He fired missiles regularly at American and British aircraft as they sought to enforce the no-fly zones to protect the Kurds and the Shiites from oppression.

In response, President Clinton and President Bush authorized hundreds of

military responses against Iraq, dropping bombs on military positions and carrying out missile strikes. Surely we have not forgotten—we were in a state of hot hostility with Iraq, leading up to our decision to remove him from power.

The megalomania of Saddam, and his brutality, presented the decent nations of the world with a direct challenge. With the growth of terrorism that had culminated in the 9/11 attacks, and which threatened the peaceful world, it became clear that the reconstituting of Saddam's forces in violation of the United Nations could not be allowed to continue. Once again, our Nation led a huge international coalition to demand that he comply with the U.N. resolutions. The vote in this Senate to authorize that and to insist that he comply and use force if he refused to do so was 78 to 22, with a clear majority of our Democratic Senators in support to authorize military force with or without U.N. approval if Saddam refused to comply with these resolutions.

Our decision was not taken lightly or in haste. The issue had been openly discussed for months. The Senate debate was full and free. Most felt there was no other option.

I remember the Economist magazine of London said the embargo was failing. We either give up or fight. They concluded in their editorial: Our choice is to fight. The British Government reached the same conclusion, as did many others.

Of course, our vote was consistent with the 1999 resolution of this Senate signed by President Clinton to make it the official policy of our Government to effect a regime change in Iraq, so bad had Saddam's actions become even at that time. Still, there was no rush to war. President Bush powerfully made his case abroad and at the U.N. Countless efforts were undertaken to bring Saddam into compliance, but they all failed. The demands on Saddam became more and more direct, the warnings more and more explicit, and his utter refusal to comply with the agreements on weapons inspections and other U.N. resolutions became more and more obvious. He had made up his mind. The stark reality became clear. He would not ever voluntarily comply.

He thought he could break the coalition, that we would not invade, that he could continue on with his fantasy that Iraq, under his leadership, would dominate this whole region of the world. Please remember, the Senate vote consisted not just of a majority of the Democratic Members but it included the Democratic Party's Presidential candidate, its Vice Presidential candidate, its leader, its former Vice Presidential candidate, and then and current leaders. The decision was a bipartisan decision. Only then did we send our finest soldiers into harm's way—a bipartisan decision, after extensive debate by this body.

Our soldiers, as a result of this process, were then directed to engage and

defeat one of the world's largest armies, to effect a regime change in Iraq. The men and women of our military heard their Nation's call, as they have for so many years. They responded with professionalism, courage, and determination. The challenge was great. The initial hostilities and military actions went exceedingly well, but it was very dangerous and there were important threats that they faced throughout that effort. Saddam's forces were vast, but they collapsed relatively quickly in the face of our aggressive forces executing General Frank's superb battle plan. While the effort was fraught with dangers, as our media told us every night, and indeed there was considerable tough fighting, our soldiers were again magnificent. We all rejoiced to see the Iraqi celebrations break out.

Some said, What happened to the celebrations? They were there. We saw them on TV, to see the fall of the statue of Saddam. The coalition then set about to help this exhausted nation, brutalized by decades of oppression, rebuild itself with freedom and prosperity.

While the initial military conflict went better than we could have hoped, our vision for a prosperous and democratic Iraq is still on track. But it definitely has presented more difficulties than most of us anticipated. It has been hard. It has been difficult. Suicide bombers persist in their hateful bombings. Terrorists are still active against our forces and the people in Iraq, attacking their own people. Still, despite the violence, initial elections were completed with blue fingers held high and a separate election ratified the Constitution. Now the first democratic elections are set for December and are on track.

Vicious, terroristic suicide bombers remain. While they will be able to inflict suffering and fear on the people of Iraq and death on our soldiers, their efforts are and must be doomed. The terrorists offer no hope, no plan, no vision. They simply desire, like Saddam, to seize power and run Iraq for their own purposes, to control the reins of power for their own radical and twisted purposes.

But, our military personnel, soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen, all one force, have performed magnificently. I have been to Iraq three times, and visited with active, Guard and Reserve units. I talked to the soldiers and we are so proud of them. They have not whined or advocated retreat. They want the war to be successful. Every day they go out on patrol placing their lives on the line to carry out the policies and directions we, the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the President gave them. Our soldiers know their civics. They are placing their lives on the line for America. Because in this Republic, the proper governmental authorities of the people have spoken.

Consistently, they tell me, their parents, and their friends that they be-

lieve in what they are doing. They know the Iraqi people want a better life. They, by countless acts of kindness and courtesy, amid the violence and strain of war, work to create good will, to explain democracy, and promote harmony. They want to help the Iraqi people to have a better life, and then, then they want to come home.

You bet they want to come home. But they truly desire that our noble goal, their mission for a better Iraq, be realized.

Who, more than our soldiers, knows the dangers from hidden and sneak attacks? Who knows the reality on the ground better than they? Certainly not the television networks constantly focusing on violence and contention who drop in and bug out.

But, colleagues, the greatest concern our soldiers have is that this Senate, our Congress, will lose its nerve and pull back before the job is done. You see, losing our nerve will undermine what they have accomplished by blood and sweat.

While remarkably steadfast and determined, they do not like what they see and hear from Congress or the media. Their successes ignored, the problems exaggerated. Their errors are highlighted. I am particularly concerned that our Senate debate in recent months has become infected by personal animosity and political venom. The rhetoric coming out of Congress is astounding. It was somewhat understandable last year, when we were in a Presidential election campaign, that the political language would be overheated. But, now, after the American people have affirmed President Bush's leadership by reelecting him with the first majority vote for President in many years, there seems to be a blind force driving some of my Democrat colleagues to prove their votes for military force in Iraq were wrong, and that our election was not an affirmation of our Nation's bipartisan Iraqi policy, but that this policy was a result of "lies." What false and damaging rhetoric this is. I urge my colleagues to remember that the world, our enemies, and our soldiers fighting for our policies are listening. While there were intelligence failures, our leaders did not lie us into war. We Senators heard the same intelligence estimates and we voted to authorize war. The truth is this: We all heard the intelligence and we authorized those hostilities. Some of the intelligence was wrong, but it was not wrong that an unleashed Saddam, freed from his box, would again become a dangerous threat to world peace. That is a true fact. That is a strategic issue we faced. As we wrestle over the intelligence failures that occurred, we must not overreact. This Senate should never parrot the false charges of our enemies. If we make errors, confront them honestly and fix them. But undermining our Nation's position in the world, encouraging the enemy to falsely believe the U.S. is divided, and leading the enemy

to believe that we may quit if they can just kill a few more American soldiers or marines is wrong, wrong, wrong. Political animosity in some cases seems to have so infected our rhetoric that criticism has become not constructive but destructive.

So my plea to my colleagues is insistent. Please remember that the world hears what we say here. Please remember that exaggerated political charges can do more than sting officials at home. The world hears what is said, and many believe what is being said.

This war was not based on a lie. I have explained how we came to our final vote. The issue of the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was important, but it was the strategic recognition that an unrepentant and triumphant Saddam, unloosed from the U.N. embargo and in acting violation of 16 U.N. resolutions, was the fundamental threat to us and to the world. And we certainly all knew that weapons of mass destruction would surely be his easiest tool for international intimidation.

The United Nations' final report when they exited the country concluded that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction and virtually all intelligence agencies in the world, including the French that certainly were not under, our control agreed. The Intelligence Committee report, phase I, unanimously passed 17 to 0, concluded, however, that the intelligence given to the President and Congress was wrong in part. The report specifically concluded that President Bush was not lying to the American people. And, importantly, the report concluded that the intelligence community was not pressured to alter or shape their views to please the President or anyone else.

Another major report, the Robb-Silberman Report—Senator Robb, a former Democratic Member of this body, was cochairman—on weapons of mass destruction, was clear. They found "no evidence of political pressure to influence the Intelligence Community's pre-war assessments of Iraq's weapons programs . . . analysts universally asserted that in no instance did political pressure cause them to skew or alter any of their analytical judgments. We conclude that it was the paucity of intelligence and poor analytical tradecraft, rather than political pressure, that produced the inaccurate pre-war intelligence assessments."

So why do our colleagues continue to promote what I believe are falsehoods? Why call the President and the Vice President liars? Why accuse them of sending soldiers to death based on some secret agenda? We debated it openly here for months. For the life of me, I can't understand it. We all—all of us—know the facts today; we knew the situation then; we know the score. There was no mystery when we voted to authorize military force, nor is there mystery now. The going, though, is tough in Iraq now. The need, therefore, is even greater for us to all work

together to meet the challenge and successfully conclude our policies to create a better, positive, democratic, and prosperous future for Iraq. We must pull together and focus on the goal we endorsed when the war started.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The Senator from Rhode Island.

(The remarks of Mr. REED pertaining to the introduction of S. 1989 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

VETERANS DAY

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, tomorrow our country is going to be celebrating Veterans Day. Together, across the country, we will be honoring the service and sacrifice that so many Americans have made to keep all of us safe and free.

Tomorrow, in the State of Washington, I am going to join with local veterans at a breakfast for the Compass Center, which provides services to homeless veterans.

I will be at a "Service of Remembrance" at the Evergreen-Washelli Memorial Park in Seattle, and I will visit the Washington Soldiers Home in Pierce County.

I am looking forward to those events and the chance to share my thanks with those who have sacrificed so much.

Veterans Day is not just a ceremonial holiday. It is not just an occasion for us to thank others for what they have done for us. It is also a time to ask if we have done enough for those who serve our country. And that is a very timely occasion today with so many veterans coming home from places such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and with an aging veterans population that needs more care today.

So today I ask: Are we keeping our promise to those who served our country? Do our politicians and our budgets reflect the great debt that we owe to so many veterans?

I want to try to answer that question by looking at how we treat our veterans who need health care and how we budget for their needs and how we treat our Guard and Reserve members.

First of all, we recognize we have an obligation to those who serve us. When they signed up to serve our country, we agreed to take care of them. They kept their part of the bargain, and now we need to keep ours.

In my home State of Washington, we have made a tremendous contribution to that effort. I am sad to report that 102 servicemembers from Washington State have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our Nation in this war in Iraq. They have earned a place of eternal honor in a rollcall of freedom.

We owe them and their families a debt that can never be fully repaid.

Many other veterans have come home to us with serious injuries, both visible and invisible. They need our help as well.

Today, more than 6,500 Washington State citizens are serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Since 2001, more than 1 million Americans have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and of those 20,000 have been from my home State of Washington.

Back in March, I traveled to Iraq and Kuwait. I had the opportunity to meet with a number of our Washington State National Guard who are serving our country there. I saw firsthand they were all operating under tremendously difficult and dangerous conditions. I also saw how every one of them was professional and fully committed to completing their mission.

We need to do right by everyone who serves us because we made a promise and because it keeps our military strong. The way we treat our veterans today affects our ability to recruit new soldiers tomorrow. But don't take my word for it. Listen to what George Washington once said:

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country.

Those are the words of George Washington. They are just as true today as when he said them.

Let's look at how well we are keeping our promise, starting with health care. We can all be proud the VA provides some of the best health care available anywhere in America. We have a great health care system in the VA, but we don't fund it like a priority. Every year it is a struggle to get Congress to provide the funding that is needed. That is why we need to make veterans health care spending mandatory so it is not subject to budget games every year.

This year we had a big fight to make sure veterans did not lose their health care. Starting last February, I began warning that the lines were growing at the VA and we needed to do more. I pointed to the many veterans who were returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan who needed care. Three times I offered amendments to boost VA funding in the Senate. And three times they were voted down. For months the VA and the administration assured us that everything was fine.

But then in June we learned that the VA was facing a massive shortfall of \$1 billion. Again, I introduced a bill to provide the \$1.5 billion in supplemental that the VA needed for funding. That time it passed.

Today, the House and the Senate are in negotiations to set the final veterans health care budget for fiscal year 2006. I am very concerned we will not provide enough funding. Yesterday, I joined with leaders from six national veterans service organizations to send

a message. Together, we said we are watching. We expect the House and the Senate to keep their commitment to America's veterans. Any dollar below the Senate level is \$1 taken away from a veteran. It is a VA clinic that will not be constructed. It is a VA doctor who will not be hired. It is a veteran who doesn't get the care America promised them when they enlisted. We cannot leave our veterans without care; we have to stick with the Senate budget in the final appropriations bill.

I am also very concerned about how we treat those who have challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Instead of focusing on getting help to those who need it, today the VA is moving to scrutinize and stigmatize our veterans with post-traumatic stress syndrome. That is why I worked with Senators DURBIN and OBAMA to put language into the Senate VA bill that will require the VA to explain its plan to Congress and to hold veterans harmless, except, of course, in cases of fraud. Those protections have to stay in the final bill that emerges from this conference. We will be watching.

As I think about the way we treat veterans health care, it is pretty clear we need to do two more things. First of all, the VA has to provide an accurate accounting of how it is spending the money we have provided. It needs to give us a clear picture of the needs it is seeing throughout the country. Second, the Bush administration needs to start sending realistic budgets, no more gimmicks, no games—send a 2007 budget that is based on real numbers and real needs. They need to send a budget that takes care of both our aging veterans and our veterans of current operations. When I look at our budget and our priorities, I know we have a lot more work to do to keep our promise to our American veterans.

Another area that concerns me is how we are treating our Guard and Reserve members, especially when they come home from the battle front. In this war, we are relying on Guard and Reserve heavily. It is estimated that 40 percent of those on the ground in Iraq are citizen soldiers. Unfortunately, today the support services for the Guard have not kept pace with the way we are now relying on them in this war. They did not often have access to employment services or job training or family support or health care when they return home.

This past summer, I held a series of roundtables around the State of Washington. I heard from Guard and Reserve members who had come home, who could not find a doctor that accepts TRICARE. I heard about reservists who returned home and fell through the cracks without the payments or support they were promised. I heard from veterans who could not find a job when they came home to this country after serving so honorably.

Our transition services are left over from the Cold War. They do not work for a military that now today relies so