

in London, where he talked about the fact that things were going just fine. But the article goes on to say that senior Iraq officials are saying that the break-up of the country is inevitable.

This is a quote from one: "Iraq as a political project is finished. The parties have moved to plan B, that is that the Shiia, Sunni and Kurdish parties were now looking for ways to divide Iraq between them and decide the future of Baghdad where there is a mixed population. There is serious talk of Baghdad being divided into the Shiia, east Baghdad, and the Sunni west Baghdad."

The foreign minister said in an interview with the Independent, before joining Mr. Maliki in London "that in theory the government should be able to solve the crisis between Shiia, Sunni and Kurd," but then he painted a picture of a deeply divided administration where senior Sunni members praise the anti-government insurgents as the heroic resistance.

So you have ministers inside the government praising the insurgency that is making this huge instability in the country. To show you how bad it really is, there is an average of 100 deaths of Iraqis every single day. This month there will be more killed than were killed in June.

3,148 people died in sectarian violence. A civil war. Even the New York Times now calls it a civil war. And the Prime Minister is going to come here and try and tell us that everything is just fine.

Now, that is a part of our domestic politics, it is to give the American people and the Members of Congress a feeling that things are just going swimmingly. But what the Iraqis are saying to reporters from the Independent is, the government is all in the green zone, like the previous one, the one that was in before. And "they have left the streets to the terrorists." That is a quote from Mahmoud Othman, a veteran Iraq politician.

He said, "The situation would be worse but for the war in Lebanon, because it would intensify the struggle between Iran and the U.S. being waged in Iraq." The Iraqi crisis will now receive much less humanitarian attention because of what is going on over in Lebanon. It is taking the focus off. And we have Mr. Maliki coming in and standing behind me tomorrow, and he will say that things are going just fine.

Now, clearly this is not true. And what is happening in Iraq is that the leadership is now deciding the south will be for the Shiia, the north will be for the Kurds, and the west will be for the Sunnis. It will be tied into Jordan. Jordan already has a million Sunnis living in it. People who have fled from Baghdad because they are not safe, bankers, university professors, doctors, the intelligentsia, anybody with any money in the Sunni community has left Baghdad because it is such a dangerous place.

And the decision now is only how do they break it up, and what do they do

about the oil revenue. This situation is an absolute mess. On top of it all, Mr. Maliki has taken the position that what is going on in Lebanon as caused by the Hezbollah is okay. He is encouraging it. He thinks it is a good thing.

Now, this is a man that we hold up as our democratic leader. But the fact is that the country is in absolute chaos, and the Members of this House should understand that tomorrow when they listen to the speech that the American newspapers are not telling you what is going on in Iraq.

[From The Independent, July 24, 2006.]

SECTARIAN BREAK-UP OF IRAQ IS NOW  
INEVITABLE, ADMIT OFFICIALS

(By Patrick Cockburn)

The Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, meets Tony Blair in London today as violence in Iraq reaches a new crescendo and senior Iraqi officials say the break up of the country is inevitable.

A car bomb in a market in the Shia stronghold of Sadr City in Baghdad yesterday killed 34 people and wounded a further 60 and was followed by a second bomb in the same area two hours later that left a further eight dead. Another car bomb outside a court house in Kirkuk killed a further 20 and injured 70 people.

"Iraq as a political project is finished," a senior government official was quoted as saying, adding: "The parties have moved to plan B." He said that the Shia, Sunni and Kurdish parties were now looking at ways to divide Iraq between them and to decide the future of Baghdad, where there is a mixed population. "There is serious talk of Baghdad being divided into [Shia] east and [Sunni] west," he said.

Hoshyar Zebari, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, told The Independent in an interview, before joining Mr. Maliki to fly to London and then Washington, that in theory the government should be able to solve the crisis because Shia, Kurd and Sunni were elected members of it.

But he painted a picture of a deeply divided administration in which senior Sunni members praised anti-government insurgents as "the heroic resistance".

In the past two weeks, at a time when Lebanon has dominated the international news, the sectarian civil war in central Iraq has taken a decisive turn for the worse. There have been regular tit-for-tat massacres and the death toll for July is likely to far exceed the 3,149 civilians killed in June.

Mr. Maliki, who is said to be increasingly isolated, has failed to prevent the violence. Other Iraqi leaders claim he lacks experience in dealing with security, is personally very isolated without a kitchen cabinet and is highly dependent on 30-40 Americans in unofficial advisory positions around him.

"The government is all in the Green Zone like the previous one and they have left the streets to the terrorists," said Mahmoud Othman, a veteran Iraqi politician. He said the situation would be made worse by the war in Lebanon because it would intensify the struggle between Iran and the U.S. being staged in Iraq. The Iraqi crisis would now receive much reduced international attention.

The switch of American and British media attention to Lebanon and away from the rapidly deteriorating situation in Baghdad is much to the political benefit of Mr. Blair and Mr. Bush.

"Maliki's trip to Washington is all part of the U.S. domestic agenda to put a good face on things for November," a European diplomat in Baghdad was quoted as saying.

Ever since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein a succession of Iraqi political leaders

have been fêted in London and Washington where they claimed to have the insurgents on the run. Mr. Maliki's meetings with Mr. Blair today and Mr. Bush tomorrow are likely to be lower key but will serve the same purpose before the U.S. Congressional elections in November. U.S. commanders are considering moving more of their troops—there are some 55,000 near the capital into Baghdad to halt sectarian violence.

Meanwhile, Saddam Hussein has begun to receive fluids voluntarily after being taken to hospital following 17 days on a hunger strike to protest against biased court procedures and the murder of three defence lawyers. Among fellow Sunni his defiant court performances have rehabilitated his reputation, though he is still detested by Kurds and Shia.

#### BLUE DOG COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, again, on a Tuesday evening, I come here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives on behalf of the 37-member strong fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition.

We are a group of 37 Democrats that are fiscally conservative, that want to restore some common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. We are a group of 37 that are sick and tired of all of the partisan bickering that goes on in this Chamber and in our Nation's capital.

Mr. Speaker, it should not be about whether it is a Democratic idea or a Republican idea. It ought to be about is it a common sense idea, and does it make sense for the people who send us here to be their voice at our Nation's capital.

Mr. Speaker, I contend that this Republican leadership, this Republican administration, is not leading us down the correct path. Our country is not on the right track when it comes to our Nation's finances, when it comes to being good stewards of the American people's tax money.

As you can see here on the Blue Dog Coalition poster, today the United States' national debt is \$8,419,336,525,769.

For every man, woman and child, including the children born today, every United States citizen's share of the national debt is a staggering \$28,129. And the sad reality is that during this hour, during this Blue Dog Special Order, during the next 60 minutes, this number, the U.S. national debt, will go up by approximately \$41,666,000.

As fiscally conservative Democrats, we believe the time is now to restore common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. This \$28,129 number, each citizen's share of the national debt which is what we in the Blue Dog Coalition refer to as the debt tax, D-e-b-t, that is one tax that cannot be cut. That is one tax that will not go away until we get our Nation's

fiscal house in order. Mr. Speaker, now, a lot of public opinion surveys say debts and deficits do not matter. The Republican leadership of this Congress says that debts and deficits don't matter.

Well, they do matter because we will not be able to meet America's priorities until we first get our fiscal house in order. What does it mean? It means that our Nation is spending, our Nation is spending a half a billion dollars a day, \$500 million every 24 hours, simply paying interest. Interest. Not principal. Just interest on the national debt.

Folks in my district back home in Arkansas, they want to build I-49, and I do too. We need \$1.5 billion to complete that interstate that will connect Winnipeg, Canada, with the Port of New Orleans. It is a very large amount of money. If you look at it another way, if we had our Nation's fiscal house in order, we could build that interstate through Arkansas with just 3 days' interest on the national debt.

Folks in my district want to build I-69, and so do I. We need \$1.6 billion to finish that interstate that will stretch down through Arkansas and through much of the Midwest, from Canada all of the way down through Texas. \$1.6 billion sounds like a lot of money and it is a lot of money; but put another way, we could build that Interstate 69 with a little over 3 days' interest on the national debt.

Hot Springs Expressway, four-laning U.S. Highway 167, four-laning U.S. Highway 82, completing I-530. So many, so many needs, so many infrastructure needs that are going unmet, not just in Arkansas but across America.

Those infrastructure improvements will create economic opportunities and jobs to build those interstates and other infrastructure projects, and they will also create economic opportunities and jobs once they are built.

But those top priorities, educating our young people, ensuring that they get a world-class education, helping the 46 million people that are trying to do the right thing and stay off welfare, but are working the jobs with no benefits, the health care access they so desperately need and deserve, these are the types of priorities that are going unmet in America because of the lack of fiscal discipline in our Nation's government.

It is hard now to believe that we had a balanced budget from 1998 to 2001. Because year after year we have record deficits. Now, why should deficits matter? I have given you a few reasons. Others, the deficits reduce economic growth. We have seen that. People lost their jobs under these enormous deficits that we have seen since 2002.

Some of them are now beginning to find jobs again, but they are finding jobs at a much lesser salary than what they were making when they lost their jobs, and often times they are finding jobs with few or no benefits.

These deficits burden our children and grandchildren, because it is they

who will be forced to pay back this out-of-control spending that we are seeing occur today at our Nation's capital in Washington.

And, yes, they increase our reliance on foreign lenders who now own 40 percent, 40 percent of our debt. The U.S. is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign lenders.

Foreign lenders currently hold a total of about \$2.089 trillion of our public debt. Compare this to only \$623.3 billion in foreign holdings back in 1993. Who are they? Here is the top 10 list of foreign central banks and foreign investors that the Republican leadership of this Congress has borrowed money from, that this administration has borrowed money from in order to fund tax cuts for those earning over \$400,000 a year.

Japan. Our Nation has borrowed \$637.9 billion from Japan. The United States of America has borrowed \$326.1 billion from Communist China. The United States of America has borrowed \$174.7 billion from the United Kingdom.

You will really love this one, Mr. Speaker. The United States of America has now borrowed \$102.8 billion from OPEC.

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And we wonder why gasoline is now \$2.89 a gallon in south Arkansas today. The United States has borrowed \$68.9 from Korea, \$67.5 billion from Taiwan, \$61 billion from the Caribbean banking centers, \$51.2 billion from Hong Kong, \$47 billion from Germany, and finally, last but not least, rounding out the top 10 current foreign lenders, foreign central banks and foreign investors that are loaning money to run our government is Mexico with \$43.4 billion they have loaned the United States of America to finance this out-of-control spending.

There are a lot of things we are going to talk about tonight. We are going to talk about accountability. As members of the Blue Dog Coalition, we are not about partisan politics, we are not about just criticizing the Republican leadership for this out-of-control spending. We are about holding them accountable just as we would hold our own party accountable if we saw and witnessed this out-of-control spending. The last time I checked, when a Democrat was in control we actually saw the first balanced budget in this Nation and the first surplus from 1998 to 2001 that this country had experienced in over 40 years.

We are also not just about accountability, but as members of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of fiscally conservative Democrats, we are also about offering up commonsense solutions. And we are going to talk this evening about the Blue Dogs' 12-step plan for restoring fiscal responsibility to our government, and we are going to talk about our accountability legislation to make this government, to make the Federal agencies accountable for the tax money that they spend.

We will be talking about all of these issues over the next hour, Mr. Speaker, but at this time, I would like to recognize a fellow Blue Dog member from the State of Georgia, a real leader in the Blue Dog Coalition on these issues, and that is my friend, Mr. DAVID SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. ROSS, again, as always, it is a pleasure to join you on the floor. And I can tell you that our folks down in Georgia are really, really concerned about the debt, as they are all across this Nation.

I think it is important for us to really draw some dramatic pictures of just how devastating this debt is. And you talked a few minutes ago about one feature that I want to spend just a few minutes on at the outset before we go into some of the other areas. But I think the American people need to understand this issue of foreign debt, of our indebtedness in the hands of foreign governments.

Now, I want to say right up front that we have no problem with doing business with other countries, we have no problem with having indebted relationships with other countries. But when you look at this sterling fact, you will say enough is enough. And the one glaring fact is that in the last 5 years, Mr. ROSS, and Mr. Speaker, this President in collaboration with this Congress, because the President couldn't do it by himself, we all must take blame. But we have borrowed more money from foreign governments and foreign financial institutions in the last 5 years than in the entire preceding 211 years of existence of the United States of America. Think about it. Since 1789 up to 2001, we borrowed \$1.4 trillion from foreign governments.

In the last 5 years, we have borrowed over \$1.6 trillion just in the last 5 years. That alone is enough to scare the pants off of anybody.

It is paramount, if we are going to say with any kind of a way in which we can look the American people in the eye and say we want to be good stewards of your money, we want to have financial security in this country, financial stability, then the wrong thing for us to do is to have this kind of indebtedness in the world.

Now, let's look at where that indebtedness is. Up against a screen of what the world looks like as particularly as we look at the war on terror, that is of paramount concern. Where are we borrowing this money from? You went through the litany just now of the top ten places. They are concentrated in the Middle East, OPEC countries, and they are concentrated in the Far East, very, very volatile insecure places, and with countries particularly like China that is not exactly playing the way they need and should play as we tackle this war on terror.

Then, if we add the oil dependency in and the energy dependence on the Middle East and where we are borrowing money from, coupled with what is happening over there right as we speak,

who is it that apparently, as of this time, is running the Middle East?

An interesting thing happened to me when I was in the Middle East not too long ago. I went up and traveled up on the Golden Heights. And if you go up on the Golden Heights and you go far to the outposts in that northeast boundary of Israel where Syria and where Lebanon are on one side, then you have Syria, and I looked over through the high-powered binoculars that the Israeli people had that we could look over the border. And do you know what I saw, Mr. ROSS? Do you know what I saw, Mr. Speaker? It wasn't the flag of Lebanon that was flying, it was the flag of Hezbollah. That tells you something.

The point that I am saying is not only is it against our financial security to have so much indebtedness in that unstable part of the world with some of those regimes, but it is not in the best interest of our national security as well.

Now, on the other side of borrowing the money is an issue that we certainly need to touch upon, Mr. ROSS, and that is the amount of money that we are spending and giving these countries just to borrow the money, the interest. It is the fastest growing element in our budget, over \$185 billion just this past year we paid in interest just to borrow the money, which is more than what we spend for veterans, for education, to protect the environment, all together.

So the point I am simply saying is that as we examine this issue, and like I say, I don't look at this as a partisan issue, I look at this as an American issue, an issue that we have all got to jump in here and deal with. This is the future of our country. And if we don't have financial security, we certainly are not going to have national security for long.

Mr. ROSS. The gentleman from Georgia raises an excellent point that gets to our point about accountability within our government. If you ask a hundred different people what they think about this post-war Iraq policy, you get a hundred different answers.

One of the things that I most proud of is that this time, and I think it is one of the painful lessons we learn as a Nation and as a people from Vietnam. But this time, this time we are seeing the American people united behind our men and women in uniform, and that makes me proud to be an American.

I have a brother-in-law who spent Christmas refueling Air Force planes over Afghanistan. My first cousin, his wife gave birth to their first child while he was away serving our country in Iraq. And I am not one of those that believe that we can simply pull out and come home tonight, but I will tell you this, I do believe in accountability.

This President, this Republican Congress, is spending \$8 billion a month in Iraq; \$2 billion a week, \$11 billion an hour in Iraq. But if you ask this President to be accountable for it, if you ask him what his plan is to win the peace

and eventually bring our men and women in uniform home, he will tell you that you are unpatriotic. And that is where I disagree with this President. Accountability. Accountable for the money, the tax money that is being spent in Iraq, and having a plan that will eventually bring our people home.

I have got to tell you that in August of 2004, it is a day I will never forget, August 11, 2004, I went to Iraq. We had some 3,000 Arkansas National Guard soldiers in Iraq at the time. And I talked to some soldiers, including some from my hometown of Prescott, Arkansas, soldiers that I duck hunted with, soldiers that I had taught in Sunday school. And in talking with these soldiers, they told me there were two things we ought to be doing in Iraq if we wanted to eventually be able to leave:

Number one, we need to be hiring more Iraqis to rebuild their infrastructure, instead of sending corporations like Halliburton over there to do it with non-Iraqi citizens who were being kidnapped and oftentimes had the threat of being beheaded. They told me that Iraqi citizens were taking money from the insurgents to lob cheap bombs at our soldiers not because they believed like the insurgents believe, but because they needed to feed their family.

They begged me to come back home and to let our government know that we needed to put Iraqis to work rebuilding their infrastructure.

The other thing they told me was that we weren't doing nearly enough in terms of training Iraqi citizens to be able to take control of their police and military 4th. August 11, 2004.

I am a member of the NATO parliamentary assembly. In February of this year, February 2006, I was at Victoria Nuland, the U.S. Ambassador to NATO's residents in Brussels, Belgium, and the Iraqi ambassador to the EU and the NATO was there. Many members of his family died under Saddam's evil dictatorship. I asked him the same question, and, Mr. Speaker, I am here to tell you I got the same answer in February of 2006 about what we needed to be doing differently that I got from U.S. soldiers when I was on the ground in Iraq in August 11, 2004.

We clearly do not have a plan. We clearly do not have the right plan to win the peace.

Tomorrow in this very Chamber, we will hear a speech from the Prime Minister of Iraq. I am anxious to hear that speech. I also want him to know that we stand with his country; we want to see a democracy work in Iraq, we want to see an end to terrorism in Iraq. But if we are going to send \$8 billion a month to that country, our government must be accountable for it, and his government must begin to work harder toward trying to win the peace and restore stability in that war-torn, in that terrorist-torn region.

So what could we do with the \$8 billion a month that we are spending in

Iraq? One month and 3 days of what we are spending in Iraq would fund the missile defense system budget for the United States of America. 12 hours of the money we are spending in Iraq would fund for one year the commodities supplemental food program for the poor and elderly in this country. We could secure all commercial planes with missile defense systems. And if you believe we are safer now than we were pre-September 11, 2001, you are kidding yourself. They are screening our suitcases, but they are not screening the freight that goes in the belly of those planes; and, as I understand it, half of the belly of the plane is filled with freight. We could secure all commercial planes with missile defense systems with 5 weeks of the money we are sending to Iraq.

With 5 weeks worth of money that we are now sending to Iraq, we could provide health insurance for all 9 million children currently without it. With 3 weeks of the money we are sending to Iraq, we could double the number of Navy ships we are buying in fiscal year 2007 from 6 to 12. In 4½ months of the money we are sending to Iraq we could restore cuts to Medicare and Medicaid in the President's fiscal year 2007 budget. In 3 weeks, the amount of money we are sending to Iraq would pay to secure all public transportation systems in this post-9/11 era. In 9 days, 9 days of the money we are sending to Iraq could eliminate the VA health care premium increases in this year's budget for America's veterans. And, 5 days worth of money that we are sending to Iraq could provide all, all United States ports with radiation detectors.

Now, I am not saying don't send the money to Iraq. As long as we have got troops there, I am going to support them, and I want to make sure they are properly taken care of and got the equipment needed to do the job. I am talking about this administration being accountable, because these other priorities that I just listed will continue to go unmet until we get our fiscal house in order, until we have a plan to win the peace and bring our troops home from Iraq. These are the type of priorities that are going unmet, and that is why we are here tonight to talk about accountability.

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We are not here to argue theories over whether we should or should not be in Iraq. We are here to talk about accountability. That is a lot of tax money we are sending to Iraq every hour.

I am happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Absolutely correct, and as we cannot talk about accountability, we cannot talk about the budget financial responsibility, national security without examining where we are in Iraq at this time.

And we cannot do it for the obvious reason that the American people are expecting us now to ask the questions

and to finally stand up as a Congress and do what the Constitution and the Founding Fathers laid out the Congress to do. They laid out the Congress to do two essential things. One was to determine how our tax dollars are appropriated, all of that starts here, and the other is oversight, and we have not done a good job of oversight.

That is one of the reasons why the American people, in many ways, are very frustrated. We have not asked the tough questions. Some of us have asked the tough questions but not enough of us, and I am so thankful for the Dubai incident because that opened up everybody's eyes to really see. When that Dubai incident happened and all of the sudden we were going to turn over port security to the United Arab Emirates, a country in which we knew from our intelligence that terrorist financing was emanating from, a country that owned Dubai, that owned the company which we know was sending nuclear fusion material into Iran, and that did have direct financial relationships through their connecting financial centers in terrorist financing with al Qaeda, all of this came to our attention.

When the administration said we are going to turn our port security over to a company owned by this country, it woke us all up; and finally, in a bipartisan way, we stood up and we rejected. That, to me, was a turning moment when Congress stood up and said let us be the Congress.

So I think that Congress has a responsibility, definitely under the Constitution, to conduct oversight of the executive branch. We failed to conduct meaningful investigations of allegations of serious waste, fraud and abuse, much of what you talked about with Halliburton, and the people are expecting us to do this.

Now, in the situation in Iraq, and let me just digress for just one moment, because I agree with you, President Bush is very good at saying, well, if you do not agree with me, you are weak on national security or you do not care about the war on terror. Nobody, there is not a Congressman in this place that stands stronger for national security, defense and support of our military than you and me and our Blue Dog Coalition. Our record speaks for itself.

I have been to Iraq. I have been to Afghanistan. We all have been there to see about our soldiers. We know and we care, but the question has to be asked now, What are we doing there? What is the mission?

I mean, when we decided to go in, I was not here to cast that vote. I was the first class of Congress to come in after it was decided, but the decision was made to go because we had evidence that came to us.

Colin Powell went before national television and went before all of us and laid it out. We took them at their word. We took them at their word that Saddam Hussein had the capacity and

demonstrated evidence of having weapons of mass destruction, that there was evidence that there was a direct link and relationship between al Qaeda. It was there. It would have been foolhardy for anybody to stand up and say you do not care about security to ignore that.

We took the administration at the value of truth and we supported that to go in. We sent our troops into harm's way. We discovered there were no weapons of mass destruction. Okay. Job done. Should have been complete. Fine. Let us head on out of here. We have done the mission.

But then the mission changed, on the dime. It then became we have got to get Saddam Hussein. Well, our soldiers went to work, did a remarkable job, found him in a hole and pulled him out. Mission accomplished. We were there. Then the mission changes again. We have got to rebuild the country. We have got to put democracy in place. We have got to have free elections.

Well, our soldiers went to work. They did not go over there to nation-build. They went over there to find weapons of mass destruction, but they become nation-builders. We got in there. Now all of the sudden we are into a civil war. We are into a situation there, terribly trying to climb out.

We have got to solve this situation, but Congress has got to roll up its sleeves and play a clearer role and a more definitive role in how the American taxpayers' dollars, how we are being good stewards of their tax dollars in national security and financial security and all that we do.

I want to just comment on, if I may, for a moment on the responsibility in terms of getting fraud and abuse and mismanagement of the taxpayer dollars out in the open. I just want to share a couple of points here. One is in fiscal year 2005, auditors of 19 of 24 Federal agencies could not routinely produce reliable, useful and timely financial audit information according to the General Accountability Office.

In fiscal year 2003, \$25 billion of taxpayers' money went unaccounted for according to the Treasury Department. That unreconciled money could have been used to fund the entire Department of Justice for a full year, according to the conservative Heritage Foundation, not a liberal foundation. This is the Heritage Foundation. They stated this point.

Mr. ROSS. I should have provided the gentleman a copy. There is good news. You mentioned the 19 of 24 Federal agencies could not produce a clean audit. That number has actually changed. There is good news. The General Accountability Office now reports that 18, not 19, 18 of 24 Federal agencies have such bad financial systems that they do not even know the true cost of running some of their programs. Yet, as we know, Republican leaders in Congress did not force these agencies to fully account for how the money was being spent before doling out billions

more in taxpayer dollars to the same programs.

In the Blue Dog Coalition, we have a bill to deal with that. We have a bill to deal with accountability. We have a bill that says if, Mr. Secretary, if your Federal agency cannot produce a clean audit, you should go back to the Senate for reconfirmation hearings. We are trying to get to the root of this problem by passing legislation that requires accountability, accountability within our government.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I want to mention just one other point, too, that I think we need to bring out and that is government contracting under the Bush administration. We cannot be fearful to do our jobs. We get out here and we run every other year and we tell people we are going to go up there and do the job of a Congressman.

As I mentioned, there are two things we have got to do: make sure we are good stewards of the taxpayer dollars and then do the oversight. Well, here is what our oversight has pulled out.

Between 2000 and 2005, the value of Federal contracts increased by 86 percent, from \$203 billion in 2002 to \$377.5 billion in 2005. This growth in contracting was over five times faster than the overall inflation rate and almost twice as fast as the growth in other discretionary Federal spending over this period; and as a result of the rapid growth in procurement spending, nearly 40 cents of every discretionary Federal dollar now goes to private contractors, a record level, and Federal procurement spending is highly concentrated on a few, just a few, large contractors with the five largest Federal contractors receiving over 20 percent of the contracting dollars awarded in 2005.

The fastest growing contractor under the Bush administration has been Halliburton. Federal spending in Halliburton contracts increased over 600 percent between 2000 and 2005.

All I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is we have got to look and examine how the taxpayers' dollars are being spent. I mean, you are talking about 24 cents out of every dollar we make we are spending. Ought not we ask these serious questions? Ought not we do the people's business of making sure how their money is being spent?

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT), an active member of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition for joining us this evening.

I might point out here that on July 11, President Bush, with a lot of fanfare, announced that the deficit for 2006 was not going to be \$300 billion. With a lot of fanfare, he announced that it was only going to be a projected \$296 billion, which is still the fourth largest deficit ever in our Nation's history.

Our largest deficit ever occurred in 2004. It was \$413 billion. The second

largest ever occurred in 2003; it was \$378 billion. The third largest deficit ever in our Nation's history occurred in 2005; it was \$318 billion. And now this administration is announcing with a lot of fanfare and a lot of excitement and a lot of enthusiasm that the deficit for fiscal year 2006 is now only projected to be the fourth largest ever in our Nation's history, \$296 billion. Even the Los Angeles Time did an editorial on this entitled: "Another Mission Accomplished."

At this time, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER), our cochair for policy within the Blue Dog Coalition, our think tank part of the Blue Dog Coalition, if you will, my friend.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friends from Arkansas and Georgia for their leadership in the important Blue Dog Coalition, as we are the centrist group in Congress. We try to do the right thing, whatever the parties say. We try to do the right thing for the American people and the American taxpayer.

The gentleman has been a particular leader showing the tragic waste around the town of Hope, Arkansas, the thousands and thousands of trailers lined up there, the clear mishandling of taxpayers' dollars, but I would like to bring up for the Speaker and for the American people tonight a new book that is pretty remarkable.

It is called "The Broken Branch," and the subtitle is, "How Congress is failing America and how to set it back on track." This should be available in most all bookstores around America. It is not a Democratic book. It is written by a scholar, Norm Ornstein, who is at the American Enterprise Institute which, if anything, is a Republican think tank. Another coauthor is Thomas Mann, who is at the Brookings Institution, which bills itself as a non-partisan think tank. Some of our friends might call it Democratic, but this is a thoroughly bipartisan book.

What it does is list the many ways that this institution needs to change. That is what I think Blue Dogs are all about is bringing that needed change to this institution because, under Republican leadership, as the authors of this book point out, things are clearly not working.

The gentleman has pointed out quite eloquently that the deficits are clearly out of control. We seem to have no clear policy in Iraq. There are so many things that are not allowing our great Nation, the greatest Nation in the history of the world, there are so many things that Congress is not doing to allow America to live up to its potential, to allow our families, our kids and grandkids to live up to their potential.

We, Blue Dogs, we want things to work. We want things to work right. We want taxpayer dollars to be spent wisely, and this book is an important read because it lists it in a nonpartisan fashion. This book is called, "The Broken Branch." It is Oxford University

Press. It lists hundreds and hundreds of ways that the Republican leadership has failed the American people.

So I want to encourage everyone to take a look at this. Do not take our word for it. Read it in the bookstore. Get it online. See what is really happening in Congress because, sadly, our TV stations, our newspapers are simply not reporting all this. They are spending way too much time trying to entertain us or affirm what we already think, but this book tells us the truth about Congress and how we need to change.

So I thank my friends from Arkansas and Georgia for yielding, and I will chime in at a later point in the debate.

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Mr. ROSS. I welcome you both to continue with me in this dialogue in this Special Order on restoring fiscal discipline and common sense and accountability in our Nation's government.

Since President Bush took office, the amount of foreign held treasury debt, we talked about it earlier, Mr. SCOTT, but I think it is important to note, that since he took office, the amount of foreign held treasury debt has more than doubled, increasing from \$1 trillion to \$2.1 trillion. Put another way, this administration has borrowed more money from foreign central banks and foreign investors than the previous 42 presidents combined.

Unlike deficits in earlier years, I think it is important to note that current deficits have been primarily financed by foreign investors, with the rise in foreign-held debt equaling three-fourths the increase in publicly held debt since the start of the current administration. The rise in foreign held debt is troubling because it makes our economy beholden to foreign creditors and foreign investors and foreign central banks and, yes, foreign countries, and represents another financial burden passed on to our kids and grandkids, our children and grandchildren.

Foreign held debt is fundamentally different from domestically held debt since the interest payments on foreign held debt flows outside the United States and reduces America's standard of living.

As you can see here, the amount of money that was being borrowed from foreign countries in 2001, during this Republican leadership in the House and Senate, was \$988 billion. It has gradually gone up to a whopping, for fiscal year 2006, a whopping \$2.66 trillion.

I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT) and then Mr. COOPER.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. I just want to mention quite quickly, because I want the American people to understand that while we as Democrats are here and we are critiquing, we are providing the results of this oversight.

And when you look at the front page of the USA Today on yesterday, they reported an interesting fact. They said

that the Federal Government is now spending 20.8 cents of every dollar we make, of every dollar produced in this country, the Federal Government is spending 20.8 cents. That has increased in the last 5 years. That percentage was only 18.5 percent in 2001.

This is serious business. And I am here to tell you that when you get out in the District, when you get out to my folks down in Georgia, they are concerned about their money. They are concerned about what we are doing up here to bring down this debt and bring some accountability to the finances of this country. We can't have this runaway train. We can't have this debt being held in the hands of foreign governments the way it is. We can't continue to be borrowing all of this money and laying it on the backs of our children and our grandchildren. This is not our money. It is the people's money. We have to start treating it much better.

Now, what are we going to do about it? And I think the American people are probably saying, okay, we are listening to those Blue Dogs down there and they are talking about President Bush and the Republicans, but what are they going to do. Why don't we hear from you and see what you are going to do about this.

Well, I want to offer and let the folks know that we Democrats are offering to do a couple of things. I want to draw attention, so that the American people will know, that we in the Blue Dog Coalition have a proposal that will restore accountability. It is contained in House Resolution 841 by our good friend from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER), and it will require congressional hearings. Because remember what I mentioned at the first. We have two basic functions here, one is oversight and the other is tax allocation.

So within 60 days of an IG report that identifies waste, that identifies fraud, that identifies abuse, that raises a red flag of mismanagement of more than \$1 million, we immediately trigger congressional hearings. Let us get it before C-SPAN. Let the people know. Let us put the spotlight on it. Let us immediately say, whoa, whoa, this is wrong here. Let us have hearings on this and let us have oversight and insight into this issue.

When the GAO names an agency high risk for mismanagement, that is cause for a hearing so that we can open that up and find out what is going on. You can't stick your head in the sand. That is bad management. That is not oversight. That is not taking care of your money. If your credit card runs up, mom and pop down home, they have to watch that. Red flag comes up, mom and pop are going to sit down at the kitchen table and say, wait a minute, we have to rein in some stuff here. Where is this money going; why is this happening. If mom and pop around the kitchen table back in Georgia can do this, surely this Congress must do it and be responsible for the money.

At least twice a year to have hearings to review the Office of Management and Budget's performance based review, called program assessments rating, part two.

Then we have another bill, H.R. 5315, by our friend from California, Representative CARDOZA, another distinguished member of this Blue Dog Coalition, called Accountability in Government Act of 2006. It will require that each Federal agency produce an audit within 2 years that complies with the standards established in the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act of 1996.

Why pass the Act in 1996 as a tool if we are not going to use it? Congressman CARDOZA is saying let us pull it out and let us use it. Let us have a measuring device.

Secondly, that the Senate should hold reconfirmation hearings on any cabinet level official whose agency cannot fully account for its spending within 2 years.

We have had agency after agency come before us. I am on the Financial Services Committee. We have the Treasury Department come, we have HUD, we have all these agencies coming before us that we are accountable for, and time and time again, I ask them the question, where did this money go? Do you have a measuring system in there? Do you have accountability? Well, no, Congressman, we just don't have it.

We have to hold everybody's feet to the fire and bring financial security back into America's government.

Mr. ROSS. People ask us all the time, if the Democrats are put in control of this body, what are they going to do differently? These are two commonsense Blue Dog Coalition-backed proposals about how we will restore accountability to the Federal Government.

At this time, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) to spend time on this or any other subject we are talking about this evening.

Mr. COOPER. I thank my friends Arkansas and Georgia.

Another Blue Dog proposal for reform that is extremely important, because it would do a lot to fix our entire fiscal situation, to get our budget balanced again, and that proposal goes by the name of pay as you go. It is a very simple concept. Every household back in our districts has to follow it. Because if you don't have the money, you can't spend it. You might be able to borrow a little for a little while, but sooner or later, you have to pay the bill. That is the same principle America should be run on.

It is not just us saying it. The former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan, said that that would be the single most important reform America could undertake. The single most important reform, and we Blue Dogs are championing it. We, as Democrats, are championing it, and yet the Republican majority in this

House has prevented that reform from even coming up for a vote.

Now, this isn't theoretical or experimental thinking that Chairman Greenspan is proposing, this pay as you go proposal, this idea that if you want to spend more money on a program, fine, but get money from somewhere else to pay for it. Or if you want to cut taxes, fine, get money from somewhere else to pay for the tax cut. This proposal was the law of the land in America from 1990 to 2002. For 12 years, from 1990 to 2002, the pay-as-you-go proposal worked and worked well in America.

Most historians agree it was the single most important factor during that era that helped America live within its means so that we could have a stronger Nation for our kids and grandkids. And former Federal Reserve Chairman Greenspan even remembers the day that the Republicans allowed the pay as you go proposal to expire, and that day was September 30, 2002.

September 30, 2002, the end of that fiscal year, was a dark day in America, because the 12 years of fiscal restraint that we had had, the 12 years of living within our means, the 12 years of kitchen table budgeting were then over. And, basically, all hell broke loose when that happened. Because suddenly there was no restraint. You could spend anything. Earmarks and other things exploded.

That is going to be a terrible fiscal headache, a nightmare for our kids and grandkids. So that is probably the most important of all the Blue Dog proposals. We have had many, and the gentleman from Georgia has mentioned several. We have had the 12-step plan so that America could get off its addiction to deficit spending, much as the 12-step Alcoholics Anonymous program helps many people across America get off their addiction to alcohol.

So these are just a few of the reforms that the Blue Dogs have been participating in to make us have an even stronger Nation. We are proud of America. We want a strong America in all respects, but America can be even better than it is today.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. ROSS. I thank our co-chair for policy of the Blue Dog Coalition JIM COOPER from Tennessee for his insight on these many issues.

And what I am so proud of is that we are not here to be partisan, we are not here to beat up the Republicans. We are here to hold them accountable for these out-of-control debts and deficits, but we are also here to offer up commonsense solutions.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia talked about the Blue Dog backed accountability plan that will hold Federal agencies accountable when they cannot account for the taxpayer money that we provide them to assist taxpayers and to run our government on. He talked about our bill to make cabinet level secretaries go back to the Senate for reconfirmation when they fail to produce a clean audit.

Mr. COOPER talked about our plan for a balanced budget. Forty-nine States require a balanced budget. I can assure you my wife requires a balanced budget at the Ross household in Prescott, Arkansas. My banker requires we have a balanced budget at our family-owned business back home in Prescott, Arkansas. And it is not asking too much for the United States of America to have a balanced budget, which is one of the 12 points that we have provided, that we have offered up, a 12-point plan for curing our Nation's addiction to deficit spending.

Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments, questions or concerns about this special order this evening on accountability and common sense and fiscal discipline, I would encourage you to e-mail us, Mr. Speaker, at [bluedog@mail.house.gov](mailto:bluedog@mail.house.gov). Again, you can e-mail us at [bluedog@mail.house.gov](mailto:bluedog@mail.house.gov).

Let me just mention a few of the other points to the 12-point plan for budget reform. Don't let Congress buy on credit. Back when we had a balanced budget for the first time in 40 years, from 1998 to 2001, we had what was called PAYGO, pay-as-you-go rules, in place. Meaning if you had some idea for a wonderful new Federal program, you had to show us which other program you were going to cut to pay for it. If you wanted to cut taxes for those earning over \$400,000 a year, you had to show us which Federal program you wanted to cut to pay for it. It was called PAYGO, pay as you go. Something that is very common to most Americans.

Put a lid on spending is another idea that we have. Stop these massive increases in the amount of money being provided to Federal agencies.

Require agencies to put their fiscal house in order, which goes back to our accountability bill.

Make Congress tell taxpayers how much they are spending. Believe it or not, billions of dollars are spent in this Chamber without a roll call vote. Simply by voice vote. We want to put an end to that.

Think about this one, you want to talk about commonsense ideas? Set aside a rainy day fund. We know there is going to be a natural disaster somewhere in these United States every year, and we ought to be prepared for those type of natural disasters and emergencies.

Don't hide votes to raise the debt limit. Instead of increasing the Federal Government's credit card limits, instead of increasing the debt limit hidden in some other bill, let us have a stand-alone bill so that the American people know much the debt is being increased and for what purpose.

Justify spending for pet projects.

Ensure that Congress reads the bills it is voting on. Now, that is a good one, isn't it? We can't pass a law to require Members of Congress to read a bill they are voting on, or the bills they are voting on, but I can tell you this.

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The Medicare prescription drug bill, there has been a lot of talk about it. It is now estimated to cost well over \$700 billion over the next 10 years. It went to a vote at 3 a.m., barely a day after the final version of the 500-plus-page bill was made available for Members of Congress to read. Now, I can promise you we cannot pass laws to make Members of Congress read the bills they vote on, but I can promise you that when you have got a 500-page bill and you give them less than a day to read it and study it, it is impossible to read it and thoroughly examine it.

We are saying give Members of Congress a minimum of 3 days to have the final text of legislation made available to them before there are votes. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? If we have made it just fine since 1776 without whatever piece of legislation we are dealing with at the time, we will probably be okay for another 3 days. Give Members of Congress time to read the bills they are voting on.

Require honest cost estimates for every bill that Congress votes on. Make sure new bills fit the budget, and make Congress do a better job of keeping tabs on government programs, which again goes back to our accountability legislation that is Blue Dog-backed, written by Mr. TANNER and Blue Dog members that we have talked about a great deal this evening.

We are not here just to criticize. In fact, we are not here to criticize at all. We are not here to be partisan. We are here to hold the Republican leadership and the Republican administration accountable for this reckless out-of-control deficit spending, the largest deficits ever in our Nation's history, and they are borrowing to the tune of about \$1 billion more. The debt is going up about \$1 billion every 24 hours, nearly half of which is being borrowed from foreign central banks and foreign investors. We are here to hold them accountable and to offer up what I call commonsense solutions.

I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. And finally, Mr. ROSS, we must begin to search and use our creativity to develop a way to put a curb, a ceiling, some restraint on how much we can borrow from foreign governments.

If there is one danger down the road that this country faces, history proves me out, the bleached bones of civilization that go far back of civilizations that waited too late to curb their borrowing from foreign countries. You look at so many of these great civilizations that have gone and nations, wars that happened. What happens if China over there just all of a sudden wants to sell our paper to another competing economy? When you have so much of your wealth, so much of your financial security in the hands of other countries who do not have your best interest at heart, we are asking for trouble.

So that is why I say, finally, we must put a curb on how much money we can

borrow and get in debt from these foreign governments.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Georgia for joining me for this lively discussion this evening as we talk about these issues that are so important not only to our future but our children and grandchildren's future.

I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER).

Mr. COOPER. The point that the gentleman from Georgia was just making about how much money we borrow from foreign countries, the American people need to know it is not just China we borrowed \$300 billion from. It is also countries like Iran, another part of what President Bush called the Axis of Evil. They own a big part of the American debt now, Venezuela, under Hugo Chavez, not exactly a friendly nation. Other nations like the Soviet Union with whom we do not have good relations these days. It is incredible our dependence.

And for President Bush to have borrowed more money from foreign nations than all previous Presidents put together going all the way back to George Washington, that is incredible. The average American back home just does not understand how much President Bush has borrowed from foreign nations. And that makes us terribly dependent on those nations. We do not want China or other countries trying to foreclose on America or any part of America, but that is the situation we are getting more into every day. We are borrowing 2 to \$3 billion every day from foreign nations.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank both of these fine gentlemen, very active leaders in the Blue Dog Coalition, for joining me this evening.

We raise these issues, the largest debt ever in our Nation's history, largest deficit ever in our Nation's history, borrowing \$1 billion a day, spending \$5 billion a day paying interest on the national debt, we raise these issues because as long as we are spending \$5 billion in interest payments each day that America's priorities are not going to be met, you can see here the red is the amount of money going to interest in our Nation. The light blue is the amount going to ensure that our children receive a world-class education. In green, a lot of talk about homeland security. Here is the truth: not much money in green that is going to fund our homeland in this post-9/11 era.

And, finally, a lot of talk about supporting our troops, and I hope we all do. I certainly do. But isn't the way to honor our troops, isn't one of the ways to honor them to support our veterans? Because we are creating a new generation of veterans in Iraq and Afghanistan and across the globe as we stand here this evening, and yet you can see compared to the red, the amount of money going to pay interest on the national debt, you can see what is going to cover the amount of money to fund our veterans.

It is time our government keeps its promises to our veterans.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4019. An act to amend title 4 of the United States Code to clarify the treatment of self-employment for purposes of the limitation on State taxation of retirement income.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 403. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit taking minors across State lines in circumvention of laws requiring the involvement of parents in abortion decisions.

S. 1950. An act to promote global energy security through increased cooperation between the United States and India in diversifying sources of energy, stimulating development of alternative fuels, developing and deploying technologies that promote the clean and efficient use of coal, and improving energy efficiency.

S. 2832. An act to reauthorize and improve the program authorized by the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965.

S. 3728. An act to promote nuclear non-proliferation in North Korea.

#### THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to come back to the House floor this evening. On behalf of the Official Truth Squad, I want to thank the leadership and the conference for allowing me to host this hour.

The Official Truth Squad kind of grew out of frustration on the part of the freshmen class a little over a year ago. We felt that there were a lot of things that were said on this floor that, taken at face value, might be seen as being accurate, but, in fact, if you look at it a little closer, they were not the truth. And we felt that there was not a whole lot of time allotted to refuting the inaccuracies. Now, some of those inaccuracies, Mr. Speaker, you have just heard.

So we are going to spend a little time over the next hour to talk about accuracy. We are going to talk about truth because truth is so doggone important in trying to determine what public policy ought to be. If you are not dealing with real facts, if you are not dealing with truth, then you cannot get to the right answer, cannot get to the right solution. So it is my privilege to be able to join some of my colleagues this evening and to, Mr. Speaker, talk about the kinds of issues that are of importance to the American people.