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## *House of Representatives*

### **Iraq Watch The White House and Saudi Arabia March 17, 2004**

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Bradley of New Hampshire). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) is recognized for the remainder of the time before midnight, approximately 30 minutes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome my colleagues, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee). We have been here doing this so-called Special Order for the past 8 months, discussing and reviewing developments in the Middle East and, specifically, what has occurred over the course of the past week involving Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war on terror.

As I had indicated earlier, there was a resolution that was considered today by the House. There was a spirited debate, and I was reviewing specific provisions for the benefit of the people that, at least here on the East Coast, are up late and surfing the channels and want to listen to the conversation that we have among ourselves. I had indicated that as part of the resolution, there is a reference, and the only reference, I find this interesting, to the issue of weapons of mass destruction because, as we know, this was the premise that was put forth by the President, the Vice President, and other administration officials for the rationale for going to war. Of course, we have discovered subsequently that the intelligence was faulty, that the premise for the war, meaning stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons simply did not exist, and the implication that was put forth by the President and specifically the Vice President, because he has reiterated it even recently, that there were links between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, turned out to be without any substance at all.

But the one allusion to the use of weapons of mass destruction is contained in this resolution, and I will read it. It says, "Whereas, on March 16, 1988, Saddam Hussein's regime had unleashed weapons of mass destruction against Kurdish citizens, killing nearly 5,000 of them."

Well, this is about a city in Iraq. That city is called Halabja. And it is true that Saddam Hussein slaughtered some 5,000 Iraqi Kurds, men, women, and children. The provision in the resolution that we did debate today appears to suggest that this crime against humanity, and it is a crime against humanity, provides some justification for the invasion of Iraq 15 years later. The tragic truth is, and to our own shame, is that we did nothing, nothing in 1988, in 1989, in 1990 about this crime, this despicable act, this act of terrorism. We did not do anything because under that Bush administration, Saddam was our ally, and many of those currently serving in this Bush administration were key figures during that moment in our history.

Our Secretary of Defense, Mr. Rumsfeld, was a special envoy to Saddam Hussein. Even before his first visit to Baghdad in 1983, Iraq was removed from the terrorist list, and after his full diplomatic relations were restored and billions of dollars of loan guarantees were provided to Saddam Hussein, the sale of dual-use technology for the development of weapons of mass destruction was approved by the Reagan-Bush administration.

I would suggest that no wonder, in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, we learned that Iraq had an advanced nuclear weapons program because, in reality, we helped to build it. And we let other countries supply Saddam Hussein with American military equipment, and we even shared highly sensitive satellite intelligence with Saddam Hussein. Even though we knew that Saddam Hussein was using chemical weapons against Iran, that Bush administration prevented the United Nations from condemning Iraq.

The Vice President, this gentleman here, Mr. Cheney, was Secretary of Defense for the first President Bush. The Secretary of State, Colin Powell, served as both National Security Adviser and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Well, according to a Congressional Research Service report, not only did we support Saddam Hussein during Mr. Cheney's and Mr. Powell's and Mr. Wolfowitz' time in service to that Republican administration, but when the House and the Senate in 1989 and 1990 attempted to impose sanctions for the use of chemical weapons, that Bush administration blocked it. They used their influence in Congress to ensure that there were no sanctions imposed on Saddam Hussein.

I fear that we are making the same mistakes now that they made back then, the first President Bush and RICHARD CHENEY and Colin Powell and Paul Wolfowitz. Because like then, we are also today forging unholy alliances in our war on terror.

For example, in Uzbekistan, we are supporting another dictator who, according to our own State Department reports, heads an oppressive regime that perpetrates gross violations of human rights and has more than 5,000 political prisoners in custody today. The most recent, notorious, was when this individual and this regime, through torture, boiled in water a political prisoner. I am sure that conjures up memories of Saddam Hussein.

And in Turkmenistan, we are allied with another Stalinist thug by the name of Sherman Bashi who is creating a personality cult that rivals that of Saddam Hussein. He has renamed the month of January after himself and the month of June after his mother.

And this is who we are allying ourselves with in the war on terror, just like we allied ourselves with Saddam Hussein back in the late 1980s. And, of course, we know the results.

So I would suggest to my friends and to those that are watching at this late hour that we remember those lessons of history. And I specifically would recommend that the Vice President, who constantly refers to the fact that Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against his own people, remember that he was part of an administration that was aware of that and did nothing back then, much to the chagrin of the rest of the world and the United States House of Representatives and Senate that served in this building and this institution back then.

And what happened? Did we encourage Saddam Hussein? I guess that is a question we will never know. But we should remember the lessons of Halabja, that city in Iraq, where chemical weapons were used against Iraqi citizens by Saddam Hussein. Because I believe if we speak of democracy and liberty, let us practice it.

And every time the President and the Vice President stand up and proclaim that we are fighting this war on terror to promote democracy, what about Uzbekistan? And what about Turkmenistan? What are we doing there, allying ourselves with despots and tyrants and thugs that at some future point could very well be the new Saddam Hussein?

Let us not ally ourselves with illegitimate heads of state if we are sincere about the war on terror, who are truly terrorists who terrorize their own people. That would be my position.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) would yield, one can only have that kind of a dialogue if we can entertain a legitimate political discussion on the issue. When those who are trying to bring these facts forward, those who have this perspective are enunciating it, are in turn denounced for failing to support our troops, denounced for failing to want to carry forward the war on terrorism, as it is always referred to, are denounced for presumably being unwilling to face up to the cold hard realities of what constitutes terrorism and its origins, then it is very difficult to do as the gentleman suggests.

I had the experience of having the Governor of my State of Hawaii taken to Iraq for purposes that are beyond my ability to understand, other than when she came back she announced that President Bush's Iraq policy should not be the subject of political discussion, that we should not politicize the war.

Now, that suggestion is as problematic, I suggest to the gentlemen in turn, as it is unrealistic. Foreign policy and defense policy are always legitimate topics for political

debate. That is how we do things in a democracy. Unfortunately, today we had a resolution ostensibly addressing these issues 1 year after the invasion of, or the attack on, Baghdad, as I term it, after which a war started. The voting public has every right to a full and open airing of different points of view.

We did not get to do that today. We were unable to attempt to amend the resolution dealing with these issues. It is most particularly pertinent, I think, when we are dealing with the lives of our servicemembers and the Treasury of our Nation. The resolution that ostensibly addressed these issues today very firmly supported by the Vice President, as you mentioned who, by the way, in my judgment is the most sinister Vice President we have ever had since Aaron Burr, this resolution tells us that the Iraq policies are out of bounds for discussion. We were not permitted to make amendments or to attempt to pass amendments with regard to this resolution.

The document simply amplified the administration's viewpoint, an election-year endorsement of this policy. It will no doubt be denied and is being denied even now, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this has anything to do with politics. In fact, it is blatantly political; it is transparently political. It is in-your-face political.

Our troops deserve better than this cursory salute swaddled in suffocating layers of political celebration. Our troops have earned our gratitude for their patriotism, their courage, and their spirit of sacrifice, something particularly missing from this debate today.

More to the point, they deserve a solid commitment for their well-being and the well-being of their families. This is something that the majority today refused to do and has refused to do.

Last week in the budget committee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Edwards) and others proposed some simple measures along these lines. I want to recite them to you: Tri-care medical service for reservists, a boost in the imminent-danger pay, improved military housing, higher pay for senior enlisted personnel, increased family separation allowance, more funding for family support centers. All of this to be offset by a modest roll-back of the tax bonanza that we granted to people making \$1 million a year and more.

What was the response of Mr. Cheney and his party? Forget about the troops. Our allegiance is to people making \$1 million a year or more.

I do not have any statistics, Mr. Speaker; but I suspect there are not too many millionaires serving in Iraq or going soon.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if I could, clearly there is language in the resolution that we considered here today that praises the troops. But the reality is that the rhetoric does not match the action.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman yield on that point? My contention is that it is one thing to argue about politicizing the war. This resolution today politicized support for the troops. The characterizations that were implicit and explicit in the discussion today made it clear that not voting for this resolution somehow called your patriotism into question, somehow called your support for the troops into question, somehow called into question your capacity, ability, in fact, even your desire to conduct a war against terrorism.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome our friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Meek), as part of our conversation tonight.

It is easy to indulge in rhetoric. It is easy to involve in a resolution with laudatory words about the courage and the heroism and the professionalism of the American military. It is just a little bit more difficult to ensure that all of our veterans, from whatever struggle, from whatever war, from wherever in terms of our history, are delivered, for example, the health care that we promised.

And this administration has failed them. This administration, this Vice President and the President of the United States, is failing them. The talk is fine, and the actions are not matching the rhetoric.

As the commander-in-chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars recently stated within the past 2 weeks, the budget submitted by the President of the United States and the Vice President of the United States is a sham and a disgrace. So, if this resolution is about the veterans, then I dare say that should be there, support from the Vice-President and the President to ensure that the funding source for veterans' health care benefits in this country is mandatory and not discretionary. Stand up and do the right thing by our veterans and just do not simply indulge in rhetoric

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I just want to let you know that this whole resolution is stomach turning for many Members, especially myself and I know the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) as ranking member on strategic forces in the Committee on Armed Services, and I am proud to serve with him in that committee, but to have a resolution that does not even recognize the men and women that have lost their lives in Iraq is just stomach turning. It is beyond comprehension on how this administration, the Republican side of this Congress, could pass a resolution and not mention those individuals that came back in a box.

I mean, I am very concerned about that, and I think what we need to focus on now is making sure that we come straight with the American people. We have to make sure that we talk about accountability. We have to make sure that we talk about troops that are coming back. I am not even addressing right now, and in this resolution does not address,

those individuals that are in Walter Reed right now, right now in Walter Reed Hospital, and I think it is important, and I am glad that Iraq Watch continues to be here night after night sharing with the American people the importance of making sure that we stand on behalf of our troops, that we also make sure that we make sound decisions and we continue to change the chart.

I am concerned about some of the comments that Vice President CHENEY has made. I am concerned about some of the comments the President is making. I think that the comments of "bring it on" and "complete mission" and "I guarantee you that they will not shake the resolve of America," it is good to have a talk of confidence, but to be able to egg on these individuals, and to pass a resolution when a hotel has been leveled in Iraq, many Iraqis lost their lives, many national media individuals lost their lives, and not even recognize that and say that it is safer now, I think is a huge understatement.

So I think that we need to continue to share with the American people, if Democrats were brought in a part of this resolution, H. Res. 557, today, we could come together as a Congress, and it would be a much better resolution.

I know I voted for the first resolution commending the troops, but I think this resolution divided this House instead of bringing us together to fight against the war on terror

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I think you make an excellent point, and I see our colleague and friend the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) standing up, and I am going to recognize him in a minute.

I heard the word today on the floor "appeasement." I think it is important for those that are watching to understand, and I think I speak for every Democrat, appeasement is not part of our vocabulary when it comes to the war on terrorism, absolutely. I think there was only a single exception out of the entire body, but it was with one exception, one vote, a unanimous authorization by this body and by the U.S. Senate to authorize the attack against the Taliban and the al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and we will never surrender to terrorism. We will never indulge in appeasement of terrorism, but Mr. President and Mr. Cheney, we insist on the truth. Never appeasement, but always the truth.

What I find fascinating is in recent testimony in the United States Senate, the CIA chief, Mr. Tenet, told a Senate committee that he had privately intervened on several occasions to correct what he regarded as public misstatements on intelligence by Vice-President CHENEY and others and that he would do so again. I would just make a simple request of this administration and the Vice President. Just tell it like it is. As David Kay, the weapons inspector, said recently in an interview in The Guardian, a British publication, "Come clean." Just level with the people.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I yield to the gentleman from Washington for any comment that he would wish to make.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, all of us have tremendous personal respect for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Anyone who has had experience like I did, spending an afternoon with a family as I did from Bremerton, Washington, this weekend, but I want to mention a question that I have.

Tonight there is someone at large who wants to kill us. This person has killed us. This person has the capability of killing us. This person has an organization dedicated to kill us. We have known this situation since September 11. Why is it that with the passage of years, that is, until last week, that the administration finally says they actually are going to have a 24/7 effort to catch Osama bin Laden? They launched a war and took their eye off the ball to catch this guy who is at-large, and now, last week, finally says now we are going to have an all-out effort to catch Osama bin Laden? Where have they been?

They have been in Iraq, and I have a question I want this administration to answer. I was asked by the victims families of September 11 two weeks ago. Why, after September 11, when we knew that somewhere between 12 and 15 of the hijackers who killed our people were from Saudi Arabia, did this administration allow an airplane to fly all across America, when everybody else was grounded, when you could not fly home from anywhere, why did this administration specifically allow an airplane, paid for by Saudi Arabia, to fly around this country picking up potential witnesses who could have helped us catch Osama bin Laden, including members of the bin Laden family? Why did this administration allow that?

Mr. DELAHUNT. If you know, how many Saudis were implicated in the attack on America on September 11?

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I think it was something like 15 out of the 19, and yet this administration, I want to know why they flew out these people two days after September 11 without the full, complete, comprehensive interrogation of these individuals, including blood relatives of the guy who we know did this, and several days later they are playing footsy with the ambassador down at the White House of Saudi Arabia, an organization that has been very close to the oil and gas industry? I want to know why they did that. Maybe there is a good answer. I cannot imagine what it is, but this is one of the questions that the people who are serving in Iraq and the victims of September 11 want answered.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, by the way, how many Iraqis were on that plane?

Mr. INSLEE. Zero Iraqis on that plane.

Mr. DELAHUNT. One of you noted recently that the individual who was responsible, the Pakistani who is responsible for the proliferation of nuclear weapon technology to North Korea and Iran has been identified, and what have we heard from this administration, this President and this Vice-President about that? Nothing.

Mr. INSLEE. The fact is we should have been cracking down on Saudi Arabia a long time ago. We should have been cracking down on the Pakistani fellow that we found was purveying nuclear technology all over the world and, instead we have been involved in an action in Iraq. Now, I am very happy that eventually maybe something good will come out of the action in Iraq, but our people need answers to these questions.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I believe that we have just a minute left. Perhaps you would like to sum up.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, just quickly, I want to say this to the American people and I hope that it is not the case that we value oil over American blood. I am just saying that right now, and I think it is very important to make the message very simple tonight for Americans to understand.