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IRAQ WATCH CONTINUES

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I am pleased to participate in this discussion.

I think a preliminary question the U.S. Congress needs to ask itself is what role we have in acting as stewards for the taxpayers' money in this regard for \$87 billion in expenditures.

It seems to me that we ought to really scrupulously evaluate how effective this administration and their team has been to date in fulfilling its warrants to the American people in regard to the Iraqi situation. It is important to know whether this administration has been so accurate, so complete, so well-planned that, frankly, Congress ought to just give the administration a blank check and let it run. So I want to spend just 2 minutes evaluating the performance in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, the administration allowed the American people to believe Saddam Hussein was behind September 11. As far as we know, according to the commission established for that purpose, that was wrong. The Bush administration led the American people to believe that Iraq was in cahoots with al Qaeda. According to information we now have, that was wrong. The administration told the American people that Iraq had literally hundreds of tons of chemical and biological companies. That may or may not be wrong, but to date appears to be. The administration told the American people that Iraq had sought to get uranium from Africa. That was wrong; in fact, fraudulent on someone's behalf. The Bush administration told the American people that troops would be welcomed with rose petals and open arms when they got to Baghdad. That turned out to be wrong.

The administration told the American people that this would be largely a self-financing operation, as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. *Delahunt*) indicated. Mr. Wolfowitz said in a short period of time, the oil would flow, the dollars would grow, and the American taxpayers would not be on the hook.

This administration's record on its warrants to the American people is sadly lacking. In that context, it seems to me the U.S. Congress ought to not only ask serious, probing questions of the administration, it ought to set conditions on the expenditure of money

that it may appropriate in this regard. Questions are not enough. Conditions are needed because this is a significant sum of money, \$87 billion. The entire Marshall Plan was \$100 billion. This is not a Marshall Plan, it is a partial plan because it lacks two very crucial elements.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I call it the no plan.

Mr. INSLEE. I think it is important to be generous in the spirit of bipartisanship. I will say partial plan because it lacks two important elements.

Number one, it lacks a sincere effort to bring the international community into this effort. This administration, for reasons that are passive understanding, has had a sincere desire to be as unilateral as possible all of the way through this effort, and they have burned bridges every possible way. And now what we see to date when they finally say maybe we have to do something to rationalize this, they offer a fig leaf.

We need full international participation in this effort because Iraq is not a prize to be won, it is a burden to be shared, and both taxpayers and our military should be sharing that burden with the rest of the world rather than exclusively having the United States shoulder it. There ought to be a condition for any money that is appropriated, specifically allocated or authorized by Congress.

Second, another way that it is partial, it does not pay respect to domestic needs. The President has said that his tax cuts are a higher priority than building schools that could be built with \$87 billion. He needs to rethink that.

Third, how it is partial, and this is perhaps long term for our children's benefit, the thing it lacks is it simply is not paying for this obligation. It seeks to borrow from our children money to pay for this operation. It borrows from the Social Security to pay for this operation. We have heard about the lockbox, and it is not a lockbox. It is pulling in Social Security to pay for this obligation.

Why does the President not want to pay for this? We should pay for it. Winston Churchill said all I have to offer is blood, sweat, toil and tears. This administration says while we have a war overseas, it will be balloons and fruit and candy back home with tax cuts, and now they want to continue to pass tax cuts, largely going to wealthy members of our society.

If this is so important to American security, the President ought to be bellying up to the bar and asking Americans to recognize this not go forward with the tax cuts. That is an obligation that he ought to take and he ought to ask Americans to share in that, and he ought to be sincere in it and not have this let us be happy and fight a war at the same time. It is not the way the greatest generation did it in World War II or after World War II, and we ought to rise to that same obligation, to the world, and to our prosperity.

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Mr. INSLEE. Is it a fair statement that under the policies of this administration that they have advocated as far as their budget that the veterans system that was in existence when these soldiers and sailors went to Iraq, when they come back from their extended tours, which are now being extended to the surprise of many, will come back to a veterans system that is less beneficial and less protective than when they left?

Mr. STRICKLAND. Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, I got a letter from a young West Point graduate. He graduated from West Point just literally a few months ago. He is in Baghdad tonight. He wrote me about 2 months ago. He said, Congressman, they are issuing two kinds of vests here, one is capable of stopping bullets, the other is only capable of stopping fragments. And my men are wondering why they have the cheap vests.

We took months to build up to the engagement in this conflict. We had plenty of time to make sure that every need that our soldiers may face in terms of equipment was available for them. It disturbs me that there may be young Americans tonight whose lives are unnecessarily in danger because this government has not provided them with the best possible protection.

That really disturbs me. It ought to disturb everyone who serves in this Chamber, everyone who serves in the Senate and certainly it ought to disturb the President.

Mr. INSLEE. It would disturb anyone who has gone to Bethesda Naval Hospital, as I have, and have talked to the Marines who have lost limbs and who have had crushing injuries of lifetime disability, to think that they are going to have less effective and comprehensive medical care than existed before they started this battle. That is not what they ought to be fighting for. It also seems to me to be appropriate for this administration to throw overboard its predilection for unilateralism, this desire to go it alone, this kind of macho policy of not allowing anyone else to be an ally with you, to bring other people involved in this effort, not just American GIs and Marines. Because the success of this mission depends on winning the respect of the Iraqi people, and winning the respect of the Iraqi people for whatever new government is formed is going to be more enhanced if we get more people from around the community internationally to be involved in this effort additionally sharing this burden.

I may add, too, the injuries are truly severe. We cry and we pray over those who have not come home, but we have got a very high proportion of very severe injuries from this, in part because of the magnificent trauma care that we have now developed, at least at the scene of the battle. These kids deserve a veterans plan that is going to treat them as well as their fathers and their grandfathers were treated and better.

That is not happening right now and is a symptom of this administration's addiction to these tax cuts on an altar that is higher than any other human value, including veterans

health care, and it is wrong. During this debate about this \$87 billion, we should make sure that this issue is addressed, too, and not swept under the rug.

....

Mr. INSLEE. If the gentleman will yield, I think it is very important that the gentleman points out about the difficulty of perhaps having to bring folks home because we are stretched thin beginning in March, and the reason that is important is it points out a fundamental truth that the administration has refused to share with the American people. They have not leveled with the American people on one fundamental truth, and that is the first 60 or \$65 billion that was allocated was just a down payment. This second \$87 billion is a second of many installments. We have already heard talk about another \$30 billion to \$60 billion following this one. This could lead to a significant restructuring of the entire U.S. military by increasing the number of troops to deal with this rotational need of our military.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Let me ask the gentleman, does this mean that at some point in the future, if we continue to have a foreign policy that creates these significant needs for military personnel, that some day on the floor of this House we will be debating the necessity for a draft?

Mr. STRICKLAND. I think so.

Mr. INSLEE. That is the \$64,000 question.

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is time to ask these kinds of questions.

Mr. INSLEE. The gentleman points out something that I think is important and that is that the President needs to level with the American people about the real cost of this.

Now, right now we have volunteers suffering the real cost of this war with loss of life and limb; but our children have a real cost they are enduring too, a Federal deficit that has gone over \$500 billion this year with this additional \$87 billion, the highest deficit in American history; and that is a real cost that the President, if he wants to show real leadership, would level with the American people about and say that we need to pay for, rather than hiding the cost and playing a fiscal shell game and putting that on our children.

The only way to level with the American people is for him to throw aside at least some of the tax cuts, at least the additional tax cuts that he wants to give to the wealthiest folks in this country. If he believes the security interests of the United States demands that, then honesty to our children demands that and honesty about the true cost of war.

That is why I believe when this debate starts, it is going to be very important for the U.S. Congress to condition any funds that are appropriated on making sure that it is paid for by us and not shucked off on the backs of our children as further deficit spending, as

this administration has been wont to do, as it is necessary to condition this money on something that is going to be a requirement for success, and that is to get the rest of the world involved in this effort. It is the only way to win the Iraqis' respect for our ultimate efforts.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I think there is an additional thing we need in addition to the sage comments of the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. *Abercrombie*); we need to stop the administration from stealing from the Social Security trust fund to pay for this war, and that is what they are telling us they want to do. They want to take \$87 billion out of the Social Security trust fund to pay for this war. And the reason they want to do it is that they refuse to let go of their goal of continuing further tax cuts for the wealthiest folks in this country, and that is morally, ethically wrong to our children...