

May 14, 2009

I will support this bill, albeit very reluctantly.

This supplemental appropriations bill contains a number of provisions I'm pleased to support. This bill provides long-overdue retroactive ``stop loss" compensation payments to more than 170,000 servicemembers who had their enlistments involuntarily extended. It also provides nearly \$5 billion for additional Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles for U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. The bill renews our commitment to meaningful engagement in the Middle East by providing Israel with \$555 million of the \$2.8 billion of the 2010 request for security assistance, as well as \$665 million in bilateral economic, humanitarian, and security assistance for the West Bank and Gaza. I am also pleased that the bill provides \$2 billion for pandemic flu response, as well as \$500 million for global emergency food assistance. These are all worthy and necessary expenditures.

As the chairman of the Select Intelligence Oversight Panel (SIOP), I want to briefly discuss our work on this bill. The SIOP reviewed the intelligence activities contained in this request. While the dollar amounts are classified, I can tell my colleagues that this bill contains many of the same justifiable activities we have seen in previous years with two exceptions. The first exception is the administration's request, which this bill includes, for additional funding for the operations in Afghanistan. Intelligence has been a vital component of our overseas military activities, and this bill ensures that proper intelligence will be available to those on the front lines in Afghanistan. The second exception is that this administration has begun the process of shifting continuing activities from emergency supplemental bills to the base appropriations bill.

Overall, however, I have grave concerns about the direction of our spending and policy focus in Afghanistan. I recognize that this conflict was neglected for far too long because of our misadventure in Iraq and that we are now paying the price for that neglect. I am concerned that in our haste to try to recover lost ground--literally as well as figuratively--we may commit some of the same errors that bedeviled our efforts in Iraq.

I have heard many people in this body and elsewhere in our government say that ``the United States cannot afford to lose in Afghanistan." That statement presumes that it is a war that is solely ours to win or lose--that the outcome will be decided by our willingness to commit still

more blood and treasure to this conflict. That is a fallacy, the same fallacy that caused us to misdirect our efforts in Iraq for so long with such disastrous consequences. We would do well to remember what U.S. counterinsurgency specialist William Polk said in his 2007 book *Violent Politics*:

We should begin by noting what is common to all insurgencies. No matter how they differ in form, duration, and intensity, a single thread runs through them all: opposition to foreigners.

As in Iraq, we cannot solve the Afghan's problems for them; we are foreign occupiers of their country and will forever be seen that way by the population. We can support them in their effort to build a stable and just society, but they must be the leaders in that effort.

To that end, we should also bear in mind the words of the authors of the current U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual:

“Long-term success in [counterinsurgency] depends on the people taking charge of their own affairs and consenting to the government's rule Political and military leaders and planners should never underestimate its scale and complexity; moreover, they should recognize that the Armed Forces cannot succeed in [counterinsurgency] alone.”

The supplemental appropriations bill before us spends \$47.7 billion on the ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq compared to \$4.3 billion for international affairs and stabilization activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Perhaps the ratio should not be reversed, but it should certainly be far more balanced than it is--and there should be some type of timeline for the transition of security responsibilities from our forces to the government of Afghanistan.

My recent visit to Iraq with Speaker Pelosi convinced me that the certainty of our withdrawal from that country has focused the minds of Iraq's leaders on the need to deal with their many unresolved domestic problems. We need to create that same sense of urgency among Afghanistan's leaders, but I fear that this bill will not have that effect. I intend to join like-minded House colleagues in seeking ways to create that sense of urgency in this body, and ultimately on leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a first step, I have co-sponsored a bill by my friend from Massachusetts, Representative Jim McGovern that would require the Secretary of

Defense to present to Congress an exit strategy for Afghanistan. The conflict in Afghanistan, and the emerging conflict in Pakistan itself, cannot be solved by us through military means--it can only be solved politically through a joint effort by us and our allies. I hope we will be able to begin making that transition in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget later this year, and by passing Representative McGovern's bill as soon as possible.