

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PERSIAN GULF
THE BEST CHANCE FOR PEACE

I HAVE A CERTAIN SYMPATHY FOR BOTH SIDES IN THE SPIRITED DISCUSSION WHICH TOOK PLACE ON THE SENATE FLOOR YESTERDAY.

I STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE EFFORT OF THE MAJORITY LEADER TO ESTABLISH SOME REALISTIC GUIDELINES ON HOW WE PROCEED TO DEBATE AND VOTE ON THE CRITICAL ISSUES OF THE PERSIAN GULF.

THESE ARE CRITICAL DAYS -- DAYS IN WHICH EVENTS AND DECISIONS COULD PRODUCE A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE GULF CRISIS, OR COULD PROPEL US INTO WAR.

LET'S JUST STOP AND THINK FOR A MOMENT.

IRAQIS ACCEPT BUSH OFFER

THE PRESIDENT, JUST YESTERDAY, MADE ONE MORE PROPOSAL FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION -- PROPOSING THAT SECRETARY BAKER AND IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTER AZIZ MEET.

HAPPILY, THE IRAQIS HAVE TODAY RESPONDED POSITIVELY, AND A BAKER-AZIZ MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE NEXT WEDNESDAY.

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT, IF ANYTHING, THOSE TALKS CAN ACCOMPLISH.

BUT DON'T WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO WAIT AND SEE?

DON'T WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO GIVE SECRETARY BAKER A CHANCE TO DELIVER HIS MESSAGE TO AZIZ, OR TO SADDAM, OR WHOEVER -- WITHOUT HAVING THAT MESSAGE DISTORTED OR DROWNED OUT BY THE CONFLICTING VOICES OF A HUNDRED SENATORS, HERE ON THE FLOOR.

"GIVE PEACE A CHANCE" HAS ACHIEVED CLICHE STATUS. BUT IT HAS REAL, CONCRETE MEANING IN THIS SITUATION.

NOT TIME FOR DIVISIVE DEBATE

LET'S GIVE THE PRESIDENT'S PEACE INITIATIVE A CHANCE. LET'S NOT INADVERTENTLY COMPROMISE OR KILL IT, BY ENGAGING IN A BITTER AND DIVISIVE DEBATE THAT -- FOR ALL ITS GOOD INTENTIONS -- WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE MISUNDERSTOOD BY SADDAM.

WE CAN DEBATE ALL WE WANT TO ABOUT OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITY -- BUT ISN'T IT ALSO OUR RESPONSIBILITY -- AS SENATORS AND AS AMERICANS -- TO ACT RESPONSIBLY BY GIVING THIS LAST, BEST HOPE FOR PEACE A CHANCE?

HAVING SAID ALL THAT, THOUGH, LET ME SAY AGAIN: I AM ALSO SYMPATHETIC TO THE FRUSTRATION THAT IS BEING EXPRESSED THAT THE CONGRESS IS NOT DOING ITS JOB. FOR MONTHS, WE HAVE BEEN STANDING ON THE SIDELINES, MAKING ALL KINDS OF SPEECHES -- BUT TAKING NO RESPONSIBILITY.

YESTERDAY, AN ABC-NEWSWEEK POLL INDICATED THAT 70% OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BELIEVE THE CONGRESS HAS FAILED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE DEAD RIGHT.

THE A.W.O.L. CONGRESS

WHILE THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN PROVIDING THE LEADERSHIP A COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUST PROVIDE; WHILE OUR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN HAVE BEEN SWEATING IT OUT -- FIGURATIVELY AND LITERALLY -- IN THE SANDS OF SAUDI ARABIA; WHILE EVEN THE U.N. HAS MUSTERED THE WILL TO TAKE STRONG AND DECISIVE ACTION -- CONGRESS HAS BEEN A.W.O.L.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DON'T LIKE THAT. AND THEY ARE DEAD RIGHT.

I HAVE BEEN HAMMERING AWAY AT THIS POINT FOR WEEKS. THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, I CALLED FOR A SPECIAL SESSION -- JUST SO CONGRESS COULD DEBATE, AND IF NECESSARY VOTE, IN THOSE DAYS WHEN OUR POLICY WAS BEING FORMULATED.

I FELT THEN, AND I FEEL NOW -- WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO DO MORE THAN CHEER-LEAD, OR SECOND-GUESS, OR WRING OUR HANDS.

WE GET A SALARY FROM THE TAXPAYERS, TO DO A REAL JOB. WE DO HAVE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON EXACTLY WHAT THE PROPER CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF THE SENATE IS. BUT I DON'T THINK THAT ANY SENATOR BELIEVES WE HAVE BEEN ELECTED, AND ARE BEING PAID, JUST TO MAKE SPEECHES.

(MORE)

WE ARE HERE TO DO A JOB; WHEN NECESSARY, TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED; TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY.

SO, AGAIN, WHILE I SUSPECT I DISAGREE IN SUBSTANCE ALMOST TOTALLY WITH THE SENATOR FROM IOWA AND THE SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON -- I SHARE TO SOME DEGREE THE FRUSTRATION THEY DISPLAYED YESTERDAY. AND I ALSO THINK THAT WE ARE PROCEEDING FROM THE SAME BASIC MOTIVE -- NOT ONLY I, AND THE SENATORS FROM IOWA AND WASHINGTON; BUT ALL OF US IN THE SENATE.

WE DON'T WANT WAR. WE WANT PEACE.

SOLDIERS AND PARENTS, SPOUSES, CHILDREN

YOU CAN'T LOOK INTO THE FACES OF THOSE YOUNG AMERICANS -- MEN AND WOMEN -- IN SAUDI ARABIA, WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT THE PERSONAL DANGERS AND CHALLENGES EACH OF THEM WILL FACE; WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES -- THEIR FATHERS AND MOTHERS, THEIR SPOUSES, THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN; WITHOUT IMAGING THEIR FEARS AND ANGUISH.

WE ALL WANT PEACE.

OUR DISAGREEMENT -- AND IT IS A REAL AND SINCERE ONE -- IS HOW DO WE MINIMIZE THE CHANCES FOR WAR? HOW DO WE MAXIMIZE THE CHANCES FOR PEACE?

IN MY VIEW, THERE IS ONLY ONE CHANCE TO ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION. SOMEHOW -- SOMEHOW SOON -- WE MUST CONVINCED SADDAM HUSSEIN THAT HE WILL NOT SUCCEED, HE WILL NOT ACHIEVE ANY REWARD, FOR HIS AGGRESSION. WE MUST SOMEHOW DELIVER TO HIM, LOUD AND CLEAR, THE MESSAGE: THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD WILL NOT TOLERATE -- IT'S NOT RHETORIC, OR A BLUFF -- WE WILL NOT TOLERATE HIS CONTINUED SAVAGE SUBJUGATION OF A SOVEREIGN NATION, WHICH DIRECTLY THREATENS VITAL AMERICAN INTERESTS.

THAT BOTTOM LINE IS NOT A MATTER FOR COMPROMISE OR NEGOTIATION. HE WILL BE THROWN OUT OF KUWAIT, AMERICAN VITAL INTERESTS, WILL BE PROTECTED -- ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

HE MUST GET THAT MESSAGE, AND HE MUST BELIEVE IT IS CREDIBLE.

SECRETARY BAKER WILL TRY TO DELIVER THAT MESSAGE NEXT WEDNESDAY. WE ALL HOPE AND PRAY THAT HE WILL SUCCEED.

BUT THE RECORD TO DATE STRONGLY SUGGESTS THAT, IF SADDAM HAS ANY DOUBT, IF HE HAS ANY STRAWS TO GRASP, IF HE PERCEIVES ANY WIGGLE ROOM -- HE IS JUST NOT GOING TO GIVE IN.

AND IF HE DOESN'T GIVE IN ON THIS BASIC POINT, THERE WILL BE WAR.

THE END GAME

WE ARE GETTING CLOSE TO AN END-GAME.

WE CAN'T TURN THE SCREWS ANY TIGHTER ON SANCTIONS. AND, FRANKLY, OVER TIME, THE LEAKS IN THE ECONOMIC EMBARGO NOW IN PLACE ARE GOING TO TURN INTO GUSHERS.

WE CAN'T REALISTICALLY EXPECT ANY MORE INTERNATIONAL OR U.N. SUPPORT THAN THE EXTRAORDINARY DISPLAY OF UNITY THAT WE HAVE ALREADY AMASSED.

THERE IS NO BASIS TO BELIEVE THAT THE SANCTIONS, OR ANYTHING ELSE, WILL ERODE SADDAM'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES, OR MAKE HIM AN EASIER TARGET, ANYTIME IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ON THE CONTRARY, EVERY DAY HE DIGS IN DEEPER; EVERY DAY HE HAS THE CAPACITY TO BUILD UP HIS FORCES EVEN MORE.

WE MUST FACE UP TO THE BOTTOM-LINE TRUTH. ONCE WE GET TO THE POINT WHERE WE HAVE OUR FORCES IN PLACE, A CHILLING FACT SETS IN.

EVERY DAY THEREAFTER THAT WE WAIT, SADDAM HUSSEIN'S CAPACITY TO KILL AND MAIM MORE AND MORE AMERICAN TROOPS GROWS. EVERY DAY WE WAIT, OUR CASUALTY LIST PROBABLY GROWS.

WE HAVE WAITED MORE THAN FIVE MONTHS.

DOES ANY SENATOR WANT TO STAND UP AND MAKE THE CASE THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN'S CAPACITY TO KILL AMERICAN SOLDIERS, OR TERRORIZE AMERICANS AROUND THE WORLD, HAS DECREASED ONE IOTA, IN ALL THOSE MONTHS?

CAN ANYONE GIVE A COMPELLING REASON, BACKED UP BY REAL FACTS, THAT HIS CAPACITY FOR DEATH AND DESTRUCTION IS GOING TO DETERIORATE IN THE WEEKS AND MONTHS AHEAD?

EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY IS IN PLACE, TO SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO SADDAM HUSSEIN -- THE STRONG STAND OF OUR PRESIDENT, OUR ARMED FORCES, THE SANCTIONS, THE UNPRECEDENTED U.N. ACTION, AND NOW THE BAKER-AZIZ TALKS.

EVERYBODY BUT THE CONGRESS

EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY IS IN PLACE, I SHOULD SAY, EXCEPT THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

MAYBE IT IS TOO LATE TO AVOID WAR. I HOPE NOT -- BUT, CANDIDLY, I'M NOT SURE.

BUT I AM SURE OF THIS. IF WE DO HAVE A WAR, IT IS NOT BECAUSE GEORGE BUSH, OR THE UNITED STATES, OR THE UNITED NATIONS DIDN'T TRY HARD ENOUGH TO AVOID WAR.

IT IS NOT BECAUSE OUR SIDE -- AND OUR SIDE HAPPENS TO INCLUDE PRACTICALLY EVERYONE IN THE WORLD EXCEPT SADDAM HUSSEIN -- IT'S NOT BECAUSE OUR SIDE DIDN'T SHOW ENOUGH PATIENCE.

(MORE)

IT IS FOR ONE OF TWO REASONS.

THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS GOING TO HAVE HIS WAR, REGARDLESS.

OR BECAUSE HE SOMEHOW -- DESPITE EVERYTHING -- HAS FAILED TO GET THE MESSAGE OF AMERICAN UNITY, AND RESOLVE, AND STRENGTH.

I CAN'T GUARANTEE -- NO ONE CAN GUARANTEE -- THAT A STRONG EXPRESSION OF CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE U.N. ACTION TO DATE, FOR PRESIDENT BUSH, AND MOST OF ALL FOR OUR TROOPS IN THE GULF WILL SUCCEED IN PENETRATING SADDAM'S OBVIOUSLY RATHER DENSE CRANIUM.

BUT DON'T WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO AT LEAST TRY? THE IRAQIS NOW TRY TO MAKE THE CASE THAT, IN A MEETING WITH THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR JUST BEFORE THEIR INVASION, THEY GOT THE IDEA THAT AMERICA WOULDN'T TAKE SIDES IN AN IRAQI-KUWAITI DISPUTE.

MIXED MESSAGES

I HAPPEN TO THINK IT'S A PRETTY BOGUS ARGUMENT, BUT IT IS A CASE THEY ARE MAKING. AND WITHOUT SUGGESTING FOR A MOMENT THAT THERE IS CREDIBILITY IN THE PROPOSITION THAT THEY SOMEHOW PERCEIVED A "GREEN LIGHT" -- HOW DO WE KNOW, FOR SURE, EXACTLY WHAT MESSAGES THEY DO TAKE FROM WHAT WE DO? AND DOESN'T IT MAKE SENSE, IN THIS CRITICAL PERIOD, TO BE ESPECIALLY PRUDENT AND JUDICIOUS IN ALL OUR ACTIONS AND WORDS?

SOMEONE IN OUR S-407 BRIEFING YESTERDAY ASKED SECRETARY BAKER A VERY GOOD QUESTION: HOW DO WE REALLY KNOW HOW SADDAM REACTS TO WHAT IS GOING ON, EITHER IN THE GULF, BACK HERE, OR ANYWHERE ELSE? HOW GOOD IS OUR INTELLIGENCE?

I'M CERTAINLY NOT GOING TO DETAIL THE SECRETARY'S ANSWER, BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU OF THIS: NO ONE CAN BE CERTAIN EXACTLY WHAT INFORMATION SADDAM RECEIVES, OR HOW HIS THOUGHT PROCESSES WORK.

BUT THERE IS STRONG EVIDENCE THAT HE PAYS AN EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT OF ATTENTION TO WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS CITY, AND IN THIS BUILDING.

DOES ANYONE HERE WANT TO WAKE UP TOMORROW, AND FIND -- IN SOME POST MORTEM ON A WAR -- THAT SOME WELL-INTENTIONED ACTION OR COMMENT HERE IN THE SENATE HAD BEEN TOTALLY MISUNDERSTOOD IN BAGHDAD, AND HAD GIVEN SADDAM THE IDEA HE COULD DRAG THINGS ON A BIT LONGER?

THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE DO OR SAY NOTHING.

GO THE EXTRA MILE

IT DOES MEAN THAT, JUST AS PRESIDENT BUSH HAS GONE THE EXTRA MILE IN OUR DEALINGS WITH IRAQ, WE SHOULD GO THE EXTRA MILE IN INSURING THAT WE NOT SEND THE WRONG MESSAGE TO SADDAM.

AND, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, IT DOES MEAN THAT WE SHOULD JOIN THE PRESIDENT, AND THE REST OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD, IN SENDING THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO SADDAM.

THAT IS THE BEST WAY TO MAXIMIZE THE CHANCES FOR PEACE.

THAT IS THE BEST WAY TO MINIMIZE THE CHANCES OF WAR.

THAT IS THE BEST WAY TO MEET OUR RESPONSIBILITY -- BOTH TO THE CONSTITUTION, AND TO THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO NOW STAND, WATCHING AND WAITING, IN THE SANDS OF SAUDI ARABIA.

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