

HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES October 17, 2003

Borrowing Billions to Fund a Failed Policy in Iraq

Mr. Speaker: I rise in opposition to this request for nearly \$87 billion to continue the occupation and rebuilding of Iraq and Afghanistan. This is money we do not have being shipped away on a foreign welfare program. The burden on our already weakened economy could well be crippling.

Those who argue that we must vote for this appropriation because "we must succeed" in Iraq are misguided. Those who say this have yet to define what it means - in concrete terms - to have "success" in Iraq. What is success in Iraq? How will we achieve success in Iraq? How will we know when we have succeeded in Iraq? About how long will "success" take to achieve and about how much will it cost? These are reasonable questions to have when we are asked to spend billions of taxpayers' dollars, but thus far we have heard little more than nice-sounding platitudes.

We have established a troubling precedent that no matter how ill-conceived an intervention, we must continue to become more deeply involved because "we must succeed." That is one reason we see unrelated funding in this supplemental for places like Liberia and Sudan.

Mr. Speaker this reconstruction of Iraq -- that we are making but a down-payment on today -- is at its core just another foreign policy boondoggle. The \$20 billion plan to "rebuild" Iraq tilts heavily toward creating a statist economy and is filled with very liberal social-engineering programs. Much of the money in this reconstruction plan will be wasted - as foreign aid most often is. Much will be wasted as corporate welfare to politically connected corporations; much will be thrown away at all the various "non-government organizations" that aim to teach the Iraqis everything from the latest American political correctness to the "right" way to vote. The bill includes \$900 million to import petroleum products into Iraq (a country with the second largest oil reserves in the world); \$793 million for healthcare in Iraq when we're in the midst of our own crisis and about to raise Medicare premiums of our seniors; \$10 million for "women's leadership programs" (more social engineering); \$200 million in loan guarantees to Pakistan (a military dictatorship that likely is the home of Osama bin Laden); \$245 million for the "U.S. share" of U.N. peacekeeping in Liberia and Sudan; \$95 million for education in Afghanistan; \$600 million

for repair and modernization of roads and bridges in Iraq (while our own infrastructure crumbles).

There has been some discontent among conservatives about the \$20 billion reconstruction price tag. They fail to realize that this is just the other side of the coin of military interventionism. It is the same coin, which is why I have consistently opposed foreign interventionism. There is a lesson here that those who call themselves fiscal conservatives seem to not have learned. There is no separation between the military intervention and the post-military intervention, otherwise known as “nation-building.” Fiscal conservatives are uneasy about nation building and foreign aid. The president himself swore off nation building as a candidate. But anyone concerned about sending American tax dollars to foreign countries must look directly at military interventionism abroad. If there is one thing the history of our interventionism teaches, it is that the best way for a foreign country to become a financial dependent of the United States is to first be attacked by the United States.

This request - which was not the first and will not be the last - demonstrates in the most concrete terms that there is a real and concrete cost of our policy of interventionism. The American taxpayer paid to bomb Baghdad and now will pay to rebuild Iraq -- its schools, hospitals, prisons, roads, and more. Many Americans cannot afford to send their own children to college, but with the money in this bill they will be sending Iraqi kids to college. Is this really what the American people want?

The real point is that the billions we are told we must spend to rebuild Iraq is indeed the natural outcome of our policy of pre-emptive military intervention. All those who voted for the resolution authorizing the president to attack Iraq have really already voted for this supplemental. There is no military intervention without a “Marshall Plan” afterward, regardless of our ability to pay. And the American people will be expected to pay for far more. This current request is only perhaps step four in what will likely be a 10 or more step program to remake Iraq and the rest of the Middle East in the image of Washington, D.C. social engineers and “global planners.” What will be steps five, six, seven, eight? Long-term occupation, micro-managing Iraq’s economy, organizing and managing elections, writing an Iraqi constitution. And so on. When will it end?

There is also much said about how we must support this supplemental because to do otherwise would mean not supporting the troops. I resent this dishonest accusation. It is nothing but a red herring. I wonder if an American currently serving an open-ended occupation in Iraq would think that bringing him home next week would be a good show of support for our troops. Maintaining an increasingly deadly occupation of Iraq and bankrupting many of our reservists and National Guard troops by unilaterally extending their contracts to serve in an active deployment is hardly

“supporting the troops.” Perhaps that is why a Stars and Stripes newspaper survey of the troops in Iraq this week found that a majority had very low morale. And according to the same Stars and Stripes survey, an increasing number are not planning to re-enlist.

Conservatives often proclaim that they are opposed to providing American welfare to the rest of the world. I agree. The only way to do that, however, is to stop supporting a policy of military interventionism. You cannot have one without the other. If a military intervention against Syria and Iran are next, it will be the same thing: we will pay to bomb the country and we will pay even more to rebuild it - and as we see with the plan for Iraq, this rebuilding will not be done on the cheap. The key fallacy in the argument of the militarists is that there is some way to fight a war without associated costs - the costs of occupation, reconstruction, “institution-building,” “democracy programs.”

I opposed our action against Iraq for two main reasons. I sincerely believed that our national security was not threatened and I did not believe that Saddam Hussein’s regime was involved in the attack on the United States on 9/11. I believe what we have learned since the intervention has supported my view. Meanwhile, while our troops are trying to police the border between Syria and Iraq our own borders remain as porous as ever. Terrorists who entered our country could easily do so again through our largely un-patrolled borders. While we expend American blood and treasure occupying a country that was not involved in the attack on the US, those who were responsible for the attack most likely are hiding out in Pakistan - a military dictatorship we are now allied with and to which this supplemental sends some \$200 million in loan guarantees.

Our continued occupation of Iraq is not producing the promised results, despite efforts to paint a brighter picture of the current situation. What once was a secular dictatorship appears to be moving toward being a fundamentalist Islamic regime -- not the democracy we were promised. As repulsive as Saddam’s regime was, the prospect of an Iraq run by Islamic clerics, aligned with Iranian radicals and hostile to the United States, is no more palatable. There are signs that this is the trend. The press reports regularly on attacks against Iraq’s one million Christians. Those hand-picked by the United States to run Iraq have found themselves targets for assassination. Clerics are forming their own militias. The thousands of non-combatants killed in the US intervention are seeking revenge against the unwanted American occupiers.

Mr. Speaker, throwing billions of dollars after a failed policy will not produce favorable results. We are heading full-speed toward bankruptcy, yet we continue to spend like there is no tomorrow. There will be a tomorrow, however. The money we are spending today is real. The bill will be paid, whether through raising taxes or printing more money. Either way, the American

people will become poorer in pursuit of a policy that cannot and will not work. We cannot re-make the world in our own image. The stated aim was to remove Saddam Hussein. That mission is accomplished. The best policy now for Iraq is to declare victory and bring our troops home. We should let the people of Iraq rebuild their own country. I urge my colleagues to vote against this supplemental request.