

too want to thank Admiral Mike Mullen for serving as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and his wife, Deborah. It's amazing to be the Commander in Chief of a group of people that are dedicated, selfless, and courageous like our military. And Admiral Mullen represents the very best of the U.S. military. I thank the diplomatic corps who is here as well.

So my friends in Texas say, "You know, don't we have enough problems here at home?" And my answer is, "We're wealthy enough and we're strong enough and we're good enough to take problems—take on problems here at home as well as in other parts of the world." And then I remind them that we're living in a very difficult period in the history of the world. After all, we're witnessing an ideological struggle between those who kill the innocent to achieve political objectives and those who believe in human dignity and human rights and human freedom.

And it's a tough time, and it's going to take awhile to prevail. But one thing is for certain, that this enemy we face cannot possibly find recruits based upon their vision. Their vision for life is so dark and so dim and so degrading that it's impossible for them to recruit unless they find hopeless situations. And there's nothing more hopeless for a mother to see a baby die needlessly. And there's nothing more hopeless than a pandemic that sweeps through a continent.

And so the initiative, the Malaria No More initiative, first and foremost, is a part of our efforts to make sure that peace prevails in the long term. And it's working; it's amazing. Admiral Ziemer is here. This guy can get the job done. See, I—one of the things that we pride ourselves on in this administration is, we like to not only be talkers; we like to be doers. We like to set out an agenda and then see to it that the agenda is accomplished.

And working on this malaria initiative, we can measure. You can measure how many nets have been purchased and distributed, how many pills have been distributed, how many countries have been affected. When we were in Tanzania, we were told that Zanzibar, which is a part of Tanzania, went from having their babies infected by malaria at the tune of 20 percent to 1 percent in 18 months. And so I am the kind of fellow that says, this is

in our interests, and I expect the monies that we're spending to be spent well and to be spent wisely. And they are.

It's also in our moral interest. Our Nation is a better nation when we help people save lives. The collective will of the American people to help somebody who suffers, who they might not ever know, lifts our national spirit. And so on our trip to Africa, I tried to make sure that the people of Africa understood this wasn't a George Bush initiative or a Laura Bush initiative or a Condi Rice initiative; this was an initiative of the most compassionate people on the face of the Earth, the American people.

And you're helping this initiative go forward. And so I've taken a breather from the movie to come by—[laughter]—to thank you very much for standing strong with the forces of goodness and light and compassion. And the work you're doing is necessary, and it's important, and it's succeeding. And I hope you take great heart in that.

Thanks for letting me come by to say hi, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:22 p.m. at the residence of the Ambassador of Kuwait to the U.S. In his remarks, he referred to Kuwait's Ambassador to the U.S. Salim al-Abdallah al-Jabir al-Sabah and his wife, Rima al-Sabah; Raymond G. Chambers, founder, Malaria No More; musician and activist Youssou N'Dour; and Rear Adm. R. Timothy Ziemer, USN (Ret.), U.S. Malaria Coordinator.

Remarks on Intelligence Reform Legislation

March 13, 2008

Last month, House leaders declared that they needed 21 additional days to pass legislation giving our intelligence professionals the tools they need to protect America. That deadline passed last Saturday without any action from the House.

This week, House leaders are finally bringing legislation to the floor. Unfortunately, instead of holding a vote on the good bipartisan bill that passed the United States Senate,

they introduced a partisan bill that would undermine America's security. This bill is unwise. The House leaders know that the Senate will not pass it. And even if the Senate did pass it, they know I will veto it.

Yesterday the Attorney General and the Director of National Intelligence sent a leader to the Speaker explaining why the bill is dangerous to our national security. They cited a number of serious flaws in the bill, including the following.

First, the House bill could reopen dangerous intelligence gaps by putting in place a cumbersome court approval process that would make it harder to collect intelligence on foreign terrorists. This is an approach that Congress explicitly rejected last August when bipartisan majorities in both Houses passed the Protect America Act. And it is an approach the Senate rejected last month when it passed a new—new legislation to extend and strengthen the Protect America Act by an overwhelming vote of 68 to 29.

Now House leaders are proposing to undermine this consensus. Their partisan legislation would extend protections we enjoy as Americans to foreign terrorists overseas. It would cause us to lose vital intelligence on terrorist threats, and it is a risk that our country cannot afford to take.

Second, the House bill fails to provide liability protection to companies believed to have assisted in protecting our Nation after the 9/11 attacks. Instead, the House bill would make matters even worse by allowing litigation to continue for years. In fact, House leaders simply adopted the position that class-action trial lawyers are taking in the multibillion-dollar lawsuits they have filed. This litigation would undermine the private sector's willingness to cooperate with the intelligence community, cooperation that is absolutely essential to protecting our country from harm. This litigation would require the disclosure of state secrets that could lead to the public release of highly classified information that our enemies could use against us. And this litigation would be unfair because any companies that assisted us after 9/11 were assured by our Government that their cooperation was legal and necessary.

Companies that may have helped us save lives should be thanked for their patriotic

service, not subjected to billion-dollar lawsuits that will make them less willing to help in the future. The House bill may be good for class-action trial lawyers, but it would be terrible for the United States.

Third, the House bill would establish yet another commission to examine past intelligence activities. This would be a redundant and partisan exercise that would waste our intelligence officials' time and taxpayers' money.

The bipartisan House and Senate intelligence and judiciary committees have already held numerous oversight hearings on the Government's intelligence activities. It seems that House leaders are more interested in investigating our intelligence professionals than in giving them the tools they need to protect us. Congress should stop playing politics with the past and focus on helping us prevent terrorist attacks in the future.

Members of the House should not be deceived into thinking that voting for this unacceptable legislation would somehow move the process along. Voting for this bill does not move the process along. Instead, voting for this bill would make our country less safe because it would move us further away from passing the good bipartisan Senate bill that is needed to protect America.

The American people understand the stakes in this struggle. They want their children to be safe from terror. Congress has done little in the 3 weeks since the last recess, and they should not leave for their Easter recess without getting the Senate bill to my desk.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey. He also referred to H.R. 3773.

Remarks Following a Briefing By Provincial Reconstruction Team Leaders and Brigade Combat Commanders

March 13, 2008

As you can see here on the screen in front of me, we've got assembled in Afghanistan—