

that is controlled by a foreign government. What happens if that government disagrees with us on foreign policy? What if it decides it wants to slow down our military capacity? Do we want another country to have that kind of control?

The Air Force, of course, did not take that into consideration. They said they didn't have to. I think this case is a perfect example of how misguided that idea is.

Airbus is owned by the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company—EADS—which in turn is controlled by several nations. Among them are countries which have not always agreed with the United States on foreign policy. They include Russia, which has a 5-percent stake, and the United Arab Emirates, which controls 7.5 percent of EADS.

Now, EADS has already demonstrated it is willing to bend the rules if it can help the company make money. I have talked extensively on the floor of the Senate about their attempts to sell military helicopters and planes to Iran and to Venezuela. But now we are opening the doors to a key piece of our military defense to them.

America's global military strength is built on our ability to use our military might anywhere in the world at a moment's notice. Aerial tankers are the linchpin of our air power because they allow the U.S. Air Force to stretch across the globe. Until now, the technology that powered these critical planes rested in the hands of Boeing and its American workforce that has been building them for more than 50 years.

Until now, our tankers have been built by manufacturers, designers, and engineers who are bound by law from selling technology to countries that sponsor terrorism. But as a result of this contract, we are allowing EADS to take over a cornerstone of our military technology, and we are actually paying them to do it. In fact, I argue that decision was a \$40 billion investment in the military research budget of EADS and Airbus.

The Air Force has said it wasn't their responsibility to take our security or our industry into account. Well, I say to my colleagues: Congress must—we must—be more forward-looking than that.

Secondly, I question why the Air Force was not required to take the economic impact into consideration when it awarded this contract. If Boeing had won this contract, it would have created 44,000 U.S. jobs. But it is far from clear what kind of an investment Airbus and its partner, Northrop Grumman, plan to make in the United States.

Our economy is hurting. We are nearing a recession, if we aren't already there. Families across the country are struggling to get by, in part because their factory jobs have been moved overseas. Workers across this country are frustrated, and they are angry that

at a time such as this, their Government is saying it wants to take American tax dollars—our tax dollars—and give that money to a foreign company to build planes for our military.

We have more reason for concern because for decades Europe provided subsidies, their subsidies, to prop up Airbus and EADS. Airbus, they have said, is a jobs program that has led to tens of thousands of layoffs in the United States, and EADS has made little secret of its desire to dismantle the American aerospace industry.

Our Government, in fact, is concerned enough about these practices that we now have a WTO case against the EU over this. Yet here we are, last week our Government awarded Airbus this \$40 billion contract anyway. That should give us a great deal of pause because EADS is already looking to build on the toehold that contract gives them into our aerospace industry.

In fact, a report in a leading French news service today says the executive president of EADS—Airbus—wants to build on the company's success with the tanker contract and propose to the EADS board “two takeover projects in the fields of defense, security, or services.”

And he said: “One of them at least should be in the United States.”

That brings me to my final point this afternoon. Why didn't the Air Force consider these obvious questions about national security and about economic security? Well, the Los Angeles Times today suggests an answer. They report on the front page of their paper today that EADS and its partner, Northrop Grumman, may have played a role in narrowing the scope of what the Air Force looked at. In fact, the Times reports that Northrop executives ensured that the Air Force wouldn't ask the competitors how Government subsidies would help pay for the design and development of the tanker—the subject of the very WTO dispute I just mentioned.

According to that article, Northrop made threats in order to shape the criteria the Air Force followed.

The Times reports:

Northrop threatened at one point to pull out of the competition if the Air Force didn't change the way the aircraft would be evaluated.

So did the Air Force pull a bait and switch with this contract? Did it unfairly change the process to benefit EADS?

I believe there are many serious questions about this selection process. As U.S. Senators, it is our job to consider the future of our national security and our defense. I believe we need open and honest answers to those questions before this contract is finalized. In fact, I think we ought to demand the answers. Our economy and our aerospace industry are suffering, and we are at war across the globe. We have to get this right. Our future depends on it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about three issues that I think are vitally important for our national security. First, there is this matter of terrorist surveillance and our national security.

This body passed the bipartisan FISA Act bill overwhelmingly—more than 2 to 1—several days before the Protect America Act was to expire. The Director of National Intelligence has told us how important this bill is because without it, intelligence gaps likely will reopen, putting the safety of America—those of us in the United States—and our troops on the battlefield at risk. Yet the House Speaker refuses to allow a vote on the Senate's bill, even though a majority of House Members support its passage. If you vote, that means something. If you win, you win; if you lose, you lose. But the leadership in the House apparently thinks those rules don't apply to the FISA debate.

Even though the Speaker failed to pass a 21-day extension of the existing law in her own body, the leadership has acted as though the PAA deadline was extended. There has been no action.

So what is the House going to do this week? Well, the Speaker has signaled that the House will vote on overriding the President's veto of the 2008 intelligence authorization bill, even though she knows there are not enough votes to override the vote. Why? Because apparently, the House leadership has decided it is more important to make a political statement about interrogation techniques than to give the intelligence community the tools it needs to conduct surveillance of foreign intelligence.

The IC—the intelligence community—needs these tools and authorities that are provided in the bill we passed. They are working tirelessly to protect us from real and constant terrorist threats, and they should not have to wait any longer for the House to pass that measure.

Secondly, let me talk about Korea briefly. I just came from an Appropriations Defense Subcommittee hearing with General Bell, our commanding general in Korea. He told us that not just a brave new wind but a typhoon has blown through South Korea, and the previous government that was in many ways anti-American was totally willing to accommodate North Korea in all of its efforts, which included building missiles and nuclear weapons, and rebuff the United States.

Well, the people of Korea had enough, and they overwhelmingly elected a new President, President Lee Myung-bak, who ran on a platform of revitalizing the economy, making any actions with North Korea reciprocal, and improving their alliance with the U.S. position. The candidate who came in second agreed with him on these issues. The previous leadership candidate got single digits.

The most important things we can do are to increase our trade and our military assistance to South Korea. South

Korea is already our largest importer for military equipment, and they live in a very dangerous part of the world. They are right next door to China and close to bordering on Russia, just across the straits from Japan, and they are potentially—they have been and they will be our most important ally. But we have given higher foreign military sales status to three former Soviet Union States and five countries from the Warsaw Pact, none of which are as good friends as South Korea.

I have filed a bill, S. 1846, the United States-Republic of Korea Defense Cooperation and Improvement Act of 2007, that would give them the status of NATO plus 3, so we could continue to expand on our vital defense trade with them. He says this is his top priority. We are already cooperating with them. There is new cooperation. There is an opportunity to build an even stronger ally in the region to help keep that region safe, peaceful, and secure.

Secondarily, for Korea, we also need to approve the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement. Free trade is one of the best ways we have of assuring that other countries get the development they need, we can develop our friendship we have and improve our economy and theirs. A Korea-United States trade agreement would give lower tariff barriers, and get rid of many of them, to keep our agriculture, machine goods, and high-tech goods from going into South Korea. We need to do that.

But there are political objections. That brings me to the third important point: Colombia. Colombia has pending with the United States a United States-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. As I have just said, trade and commercial ties are one of the most effective arrows in our quiver of smart power. In Colombia, it is an affirmation of support to our friends. They are our strongest ally on an increasingly left-leaning continent—another area where they are our best friends in a dangerous area.

The administration of the President of Colombia, President Uribe, finds itself surrounded by states determined to undermine Colombia's burgeoning democracy. The states around them provide safe haven to insurgent terrorist groups, allowing them freedom to maneuver in border areas, and they even provide monetary support for drug and terror activities against President Uribe's government in Colombia. If we are serious, as we must be, about maintaining peace, security, and stability in Latin America, the northern part of Latin America, we must work with them.

Free trade will not only expand our economic and commercial ties, but it will strengthen the critical cultural ties and strategic alliances, and that will lead to a more peaceful and stable world.

At a time when America's image is suffering in the world and our economy at home is slumping, we should be

helping our friends and allies and expanding our export opportunities to create jobs here.

If the Democratic leadership in Congress is so concerned about improving America's image abroad and helping our slumping economy, why don't we start by helping our friends? We can do that by opening up markets for exports. Friends like Colombia and Korea are fighting terrorism, embracing America's values. It is a solid security rock for us to build upon.

In Colombia, the interdiction of two high-value targets—senior terror planners and former operators—is a testimony to the Uribe administration's commitment to ending terror in his country. It is important to remember that the terrorist group FARC currently holds more than 700 political and military prisoners. Three of them are Americans. Yet our Democratic colleagues, through all their rhetoric, seem to care more about improving our image with rogue regimes such as Syria and Iran than helping our friends in places such as Colombia and Korea. Their rejection of the free-trade agreements damages our strategic alliances and says to the world that the United States is closed for business. And it does so at a time when we need to be open for business, open for better ties.

So why, in light of the economic and strategic benefits of the Colombia FTA, are the Democrats determined to delay and deny these benefits? Why, through their actions, are they emboldening Venezuelan leftist Hugo Chavez and undercutting the President of Colombia, who is a friend? President Uribe has done more to reduce violence in Colombia than any modern leader in Bogota, including crimes against labor unionists. He has pushed back Marxist guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC, and the National Liberation Army, the ELN. He has reduced crime and substantially improved Colombia's security and economic situations, with official statistics showing murders plummeting by as much as 50 percent and kidnappings by as much as 75 percent.

Today's Wall Street Journal, which I will submit later, is entitled "Delaying and Denying." They sum it up like this:

What is it about Democrats and Hugo Chavez? Even as the Venezuelan strongman was threatening war last week against Colombia, Congress was threatening to hand him a huge strategic victory by spurning Colombia's free trade overtures to the U.S.

This isn't the first time Democrats have come to Mr. Chavez's aid, but it would be the most destructive. The Venezuelan is engaged in a high-stakes competition over the political and economic direction of Latin America. He wants the region to follow his path of ever greater state control of the economy, while assisting U.S. enemies wherever he can. He's already won converts in Bolivia and Ecuador, and he came far too close for American comfort in Mexico's election last year.

Meanwhile, Colombian President Alvaro Uribe is embracing greater economic and political freedom. He has bravely assisted the

U.S. fight against narco-traffickers, and he now wants to link his country more closely to America with a free trade accord. As a strategic matter, to reject Colombia's offer now would tell everyone in Latin America that it is far more dangerous to trust America than it is to trash it.

Mr. President, continuing to deny and delay Colombia TPA will be a great disadvantage to America's economy, damage our reputation in Colombia and throughout Latin America, undercut a key ally in President Uribe, and further embolden anti-American dictators like Hugo Chavez, ultimately resulting in a less secure and stable Latin America.

Mr. President, I call upon and urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to let us bring up for a vote and pass the Korean free-trade agreement and the Colombia free-trade agreement. Not only will that benefit us economically, it will strengthen the U.S. image throughout the world and help build a stable, strategic ally in Colombia that can stop the threat of more regimes committed to the Marxism that Cuba so famously demonstrated, which brought destruction and hardship to the people of Cuba.

These are important foreign policy matters. One leader in the majority on the other side of the body said: Well, politically, we cannot do it. Politically, we cannot help those who help us? Politically, we cannot pass a bill that will keep our country safer by passing the FISA bill? Politically, we cannot help an ally such as South Korea, which is in a very strategic position? And politically, we cannot help Colombia, which is fighting narcotraffickers as well as the efforts by Hugo Chavez for spreading a Marxist regime and the totalitarian government which impoverishes and denies rights to his citizens?

Mr. President, the time to act is now. I urge my colleagues on both sides to make these matters a serious concern and see if we can do the job for which we were elected—to help keep our country safe and secure.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the editorial from the Wall Street Journal of today, March 10, 2008, called "The Chavez Democrats" be printed in the RECORD, along with a similar and very compelling article on the op-ed page of the Washington Post, by Jackson Diehl, called "The FARC's Guardian Angel," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Mar. 10, 2008]

THE CHAVEZ DEMOCRATS

What is it about Democrats and Hugo Chávez? Even as the Venezuelan strongman was threatening war last week against Colombia, Congress was threatening to hand him a huge strategic victory by spurning Colombia's free trade overtures to the U.S.

This isn't the first time Democrats have come to Mr. Chávez's aid, but it would be the most destructive. The Venezuelan is engaged in a high-stakes competition over the political and economic direction of Latin America. He wants the region to follow his path of

ever greater state control of the economy, while assisting U.S. enemies wherever he can. He's already won converts in Bolivia and Ecuador, and he came far too close for American comfort in Mexico's election last year.

Meanwhile, Colombian President Álvaro Uribe is embracing greater economic and political freedom. He has bravely assisted the U.S. fight against narco-traffickers, and he now wants to link his country more closely to America with a free-trade accord. As a strategic matter, to reject Colombia's offer now would tell everyone in Latin America that it is far more dangerous to trust America than it is to trash it.

Yet Democrats on Capitol Hill are doing their best to help Mr. Chávez prevail against Mr. Uribe. Even as Mr. Chávez was doing his war dance, Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus was warning the White House not to send the Colombia deal to the Hill for a vote without the permission of Democratic leaders. He was seconded by Ways and Means Chairman Charlie Rangel, who told Congress Daily that "they don't have the votes for it, it's not going to come on the floor," adding that "what they [the White House] don't understand it's not the facts on the ground, it's the politics that's in the air."

Mr. Rangel is right about the politics. No matter what U.S. strategic interests may be in Colombia, this is an election year in America. And Democrats don't want to upset their union and anti-trade allies. The problem is that the time available to pass anything this year is growing short. The closer the election gets, the more leverage protectionists have to run out the clock on the Bush Presidency. The deal has the support of a bipartisan majority in the Senate, and probably also in the House. Sooner or later the White House will have to force the issue.

Our guess is that Messrs. Baucus and Rangel understand the stakes and privately favor the accord. The bottleneck is Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who is refusing to allow a vote under pressure from her left-wing Members. These Democrats deride any link between Hugo Chávez and trade as a "scare tactic," as if greater economic prosperity had no political consequences. "President Bush's recent fear-mongering on trade shows just how desperate he is to deliver one final victory for multinational corporations," declared Illinois Democrat Phil Hare, who is one of Ms. Pelosi's main trade policy deputies.

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 10, 2008]

THE FARC'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

(By Jackson Diehl)

Latin American nations and the Bush administration spent the past week loudly arguing over what censure, if any, Colombia should face for a bombing raid that killed one of the top leaders of the FARC terrorist group at a jungle camp in Ecuador. More quietly, they are just beginning to consider a far more serious and potentially explosive question: What to do about the revelation that Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez forged a strategic alliance with the FARC aimed at Colombia's democratic government.

First reports of the documents recovered from laptops at the FARC camp spoke of promises by Chávez to deliver up to \$300 million to a group renowned for kidnapping, drug trafficking and massacres of civilians; they also showed that Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa was prepared to remove from his own army officers who objected to the FARC's Ecuadoran bases.

But in their totality, the hundreds of pages of documents so far made public by Colombia paint an even more chilling picture. The raid appears to have preempted a breathtakingly

ambitious "strategic plan" agreed on by Chávez and the FARC with the initial goal of gaining international recognition for a movement designated a terrorist organization by both the United States and Europe. Chávez then intended to force Colombian President Álvaro Uribe to negotiate a political settlement with the FARC, and to promote a candidate allied with Chávez and the FARC to take power from Uribe.

All this is laid out in a series of three e-mails sent in February to the FARC's top leaders by Iván Márquez and Rodrigo Granda, envoys who held a series of secret meetings with Chávez. Judging from the memos, Chávez did most of the talking: He outlines a five-stage plan for undermining Uribe's government, beginning with the release of several of the scores of hostages the FARC is holding.

The first e-mail, dated Feb. 8, discusses the money: It says that Chávez, whom they call "angel," "has the first 50 [million] available and has a plan to get us the remaining 200 in the course of the year." Chávez proposed sending the first "packet" of money "through the black market in order to avoid problems." He said more could be arranged by giving the FARC a quota of petroleum to sell abroad or gasoline to retail in Colombia or Venezuela.

Chávez then got to the plans that most interested him. He wanted the FARC to propose collecting all of its hostages in the open, possibly in Venezuela, for a proposed exchange for 500 FARC prisoners in Colombian jails. Chávez said he would travel to the area for a meeting with the FARC's top leader, Manuel Marulanda, and said the presidents of Ecuador, Nicaragua and Bolivia would accompany him. Meanwhile, Chávez said he would set up a new diplomatic group, composed of those countries and the FARC, plus Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, for the purpose of recognizing the FARC as a legitimate "belligerent" in Colombia and forcing Uribe into releasing its prisoners.

In "the early morning hours," the FARC envoys recounted in a Feb. 9 e-mail, Chávez reached the subject of whether the release of Ingrid Betancourt, a former Colombian presidential candidate who is the FARC's best-known hostage, would complicate his plan to back a pro-FARC alternative to Uribe. "He invites the FARC to participate in a few sessions of analysis he has laid out for following the Colombian political situation," the e-mail concluded.

Assuming these documents are authentic—and it's hard to believe that the cerebral and calculating Uribe would knowingly hand over forgeries to the world media and the Organization of American States—both the Bush administration and Latin American governments will have fateful decisions to make about Chávez. His reported actions are, first of all, a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1373, passed in September 2001, which prohibits all states from providing financing or havens to terrorist organizations. More directly, the Colombian evidence would be more than enough to justify a State Department decision to cite Venezuela as a state sponsor of terrorism. Once cited, Venezuela would be subject to a number of automatic sanctions, some of which could complicate its continuing export of oil to the United States. A cutoff would temporarily inconvenience Americans—and cripple Venezuela, which could have trouble selling its heavy oil in other markets.

For now, the Bush administration appears anxious to avoid this kind of confrontation. U.S. intelligence agencies are analyzing the Colombian evidence; officials say they will share any conclusions with key Latin American governments. Yet those governments have mostly shrunk from confronting Chávez

in the past, and some have quietly urged Bush to take him on. If the president decides to ignore clear evidence that Venezuela has funded and conspired with an officially designated terrorist organization, he will flout what has been his first principle since Sept. 11, 2001.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the concurrent budget resolution, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 70) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2009 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2008 and 2010 through 2013.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I would like to be informed when I have used 45 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will so inform the Senator.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we come to the floor with a budget resolution that came out of the committee last week. I think it is important to set the stage in recognition of the fiscal condition of the country as we present this budget.

We have seen a dramatic deterioration in the budget situation under this President. As we all know, he inherited a budget that was in surplus; in fact, a budget that was estimated to have a future of surpluses so large that the head of the Federal Reserve said we were in danger of paying off the Federal debt. That is a danger I would like to have.

The President then took us on a fiscal course that has produced four of the five largest deficits in our history. In fact, it may turn out to be five of the largest deficits in our history, depending on how events unfold this year.

We can see in the previous years we were having budget surpluses, and then the President took us into deficit and deepened those deficits until we reached a record deficit in 2004 of \$413