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Senate

Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein

"On the Feinstein Amendment to the Iraq Supplemental"

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I believe this amendment to this supplemental would provide some additional transparency and oversight as to how the \$20.3 billion in reconstruction funding is spent. The amendment essentially releases the appropriation of the \$20.3 billion in three tranches. These tranches are not fenced, but they are conditioned on the President presenting a reconstruction plan to Congress with specific goals and timetables, and reporting to Congress on how that plan is being implemented.

The amendment began as a bipartisan amendment. Unfortunately, at this stage it is not, but it is cosponsored by Senators Murray, Durbin, Johnson, Clinton, and Boxer.

Specifically, the amendment would provide for the immediate release of one-third of the \$20.3 billion for reconstruction in Iraq -- that is \$6.77 billion -- with the

President required to provide Congress with a comprehensive plan for Iraqi reconstruction. The plan would include goals and timetables for specific reconstruction activities.

Second, it would provide for the release of the remaining \$13.54 billion requested in two equal disbursements of \$6.77 billion. The second tranche after 120 days -- or 4 months -- and the final after 240 days.

Both disbursements would be subject to a Presidential determination that the goals and timetables spelled out in these detailed reports are being met.

Third, this would require that the President submit reports to Congress every 60 days about how the money is spent.

What is the purpose of this? This is a lot of money. The American public are divided

on whether we should spend \$20 billion reconstructing Iraq or we should give it for deficit reduction or to priorities in this country. There is no plan. We do not know exactly how this money is going to be spent.

What this amendment aims to do is provide a mechanism for both a certification process by the President that the goals and timetables are being met and for regular reports to this Congress about how that is taking place. That does not seem to me to be too much to ask.

In doing so, it also gives us the ability to review how the money is being spent, what costs are being incurred, who else is contributing, and what progress is being made in meeting important security, political, and economic reconstruction milestones. These are significant improvements.

It is hard for me to

understand why the administration does not want this to be done, why the administration expects to be given a blank check, and this body that is charged with the purse strings is not able to carry out diligent oversight.

There may be a significant disagreement among Members of the Senate about the wisdom of a course of action which has led us to this point in Iraq. But now that the United States is in Iraq, it is clear to me we must stay the course. We must rebuild the infrastructure. We must prevent civil war. We must see to it that Iraq does not become a base for terror and instability throughout the region.

Indeed, from a national security perspective, I strongly believe the United States cannot turn tail and run. Instead, we must see to it that a stable governmental structure and a viable economy, apart from Saddam's tyrannical dictatorship, can in fact be put in place. If the United States were to pull out without completing the job -- which rejection of the supplemental would mean -- I believe Iraq would inevitably see civil war and a return to the Baathist regime, perhaps headed by someone as bad as or worse than Saddam Hussein. If the United States were to cut and run, as we did

in Lebanon, or more recently in Somalia, we would send precisely the wrong message to both our friends and our foes around the world.

For many, the challenges we now face in Iraq illustrate the shortcomings of a doctrine of unilateral preemption and preventive war to deal with an asymmetrical threat. When we use force against a state to seek regime change, we are left with the inescapable reality and role that we have today, and that is nation building. There is no other way to put it. But once there, we must complete the task.

As much as I may wish we could structure this package as loans, that there be greater international contributions to the reconstruction effort, that Iraqi oil could be quickly brought on line to underwrite costs, that some of the funds earmarked to be spent in Iraq could be spent on domestic priorities instead, or that we pay for this supplemental by deferring a large tax cut for Americans earning more than \$340,000 a year, thus far, all those options have been debated and voted down in this body. I voted for all these amendments, both in committee and on the floor.

But today the United States has an inescapable responsibility in Iraq. It is

clear to me that now we are there, we must win the peace. However, we, as a Senate, also have a responsibility, to know what the plan is, to be able to buy into that plan, to understand the goals and the timetables of this reconstruction effort, to know when a constitution will be written, to know when a government can be turned over, and to understand what specific projects are going to be undertaken.

This amendment asks for nothing more than that. It is justified, I believe, because it does just that. I had five Republican sponsors. Apparently they were weaned off by the White House. But this resolution was carefully crafted not to create a problem for the administration but to say, as a Senate, we have an absolute right to know the details, to know the timelines, to know the plans, and you, Mr. President, have an obligation to report to us on what they are and to certify that what you say is actually happening.

That is all this amendment does. It does not fence funds. It does not require another vote by this body. But it does say, if we support you, you have an obligation to let us know what you are doing, how you are doing it, and the timelines of completing the mission. I don't think that is

too much to ask.

Along with my prior cosponsors, before they dropped off, we worked hard on this. This was negotiated not to present an encumbrance but to present a justifiable reporting requirement with certification by the President. The only thing was that the money would be released in three equal tranches 4 months apart.

I have a very hard time, unless people do not want to say what they are doing, as to why this amendment would not be acceptable to the other side of this aisle as well as to this side of the aisle. It is my sincere

hope that by some miracle we could get that concurrence.

The work we have yet to do in Iraq is consequential. How do we stabilize Iraq? It is a nation with a long and bloody history of tribal rivalries. It has known only despotism and tyranny. How do we plant the seeds of democracy? What is the timeline for that? This country has never known democracy. How do we rebuild an economy shattered by years of neglect, repression, and war? I believe we can accomplish this job. Iraq could well become a beacon of stability in this volatile area. But it is a tall order.

In conclusion, I believe the amendment is a well-thought-out approach that gives Congress and the American people a more meaningful and substantive oversight role in the reconstruction of Iraq and it says to this administration, we will work with you, we will stay the course, but the American people must know where that course will lead us and how we are going to get there. This amendment asks for no more and no less.

I yield the floor.