Mr. President, on just one more issue, quickly, the

Democratic leader was in the Chamber moments ago speaking of something

I am very concerned about as well. This is the front page of the Wall

Street Journal today and it says:

Let me read from the report.

That disclosure came just days after the top Defense Department

auditor asked the office to investigate whether Halliburton subsidiary

Kellogg Brown & Root overcharged for fuel deliveries by more than $61

million.

This isn't the first whisper of this kind of issue. Week after week

after week, for months we have been hearing these charges. Do you think

anybody in the executive branch seems very concerned about them?

Apparently the auditors in the Defense Department are. But do you see

anybody scrambling to hold a hearing about it and do some investigation

and some inquiry to bring somebody to account for this? It is as quiet

as church mice around here.

In the last 6 or 8 years, every time there was a hiccup there would

be a Senate investigation or a congressional investigation and we would

hire special counsel and lawyers and have people under oath. Here is an

example of what we ought to be investigating as well.

How about getting to the bottom of this issue. The U.S. taxpayers are

being overcharged $200 million, perhaps, for hauling gasoline into Iraq

by a company that is charging $1 more than anybody else is charging for

hauling the same gasoline into Iraq. How about some accountability for

the American taxpayer. After all, this money comes from the American

taxpayer. Overcharging, kickbacks, cronyism, preferential contracts,

nonbid contracts--this demands, this begs for an investigation. This

Congress has a responsibility to do it.

I suppose the administration, this Congress, and the majority party

can ignore this for another week or another month. This is not going to

go away. Kickbacks, overcharges--this isn't going to go away. The fact

is this company just got a new contract. This is a slap on the wrist, a

pat on the back. That is what this is all about. Let us have an

investigation to find out who is doing this. Let us suspend those

contracts right now. If we have work to do, if we have fuel to haul, if

we have supplies to buy, if we have projects to finish, let us get

contractors to do that. Let us have contracts to haul that fuel and to

provide those supplies so that we are not going to have to wonder

whether there are kickbacks or overcharges or fraud.

I am sick and tired of reading this in the papers and seeing inaction

in this Congress--none. Week after week after week we have read about

Halliburton and its subsidiary. It is not just us. The auditors in the

Department of Defense think the taxpayers have been bilked--not by a

thousand dollars or a couple hundred thousand dollars, but by tens and

tens and tens of millions of dollars. Auditors in the Department of

Defense believe that and are asking these questions. Yet this place

looks as if it is at parade rest; won't move a muscle.

There needs to be an investigation by the committees and the

leadership of this Senate. My colleague, Senator Daschle, described

that obligation this morning. There needs to be an investigation. I

hope this will happen soon.

It was my great concern, as I expressed when the Congress passed

nearly $20 billion for reconstruction in Iraq, that this was throwing

money up in the air in a way that called for a carnival of greed. It

looks like hogs in the cornfield. You have all of this money--billions

and billions of dollars for the reconstruction of Iraq--and you have

contractors running around trying to grab some of it. This contractor

was one of the first with no-bid contracts, now we see these

allegations--and they have been going on for months--about overcharges.

Now we see allegations of kickbacks.

The taxpayers deserve better than that. The taxpayers deserve

accountability. This money is not some money that vanishes somewhere.

This is money that comes from the pockets of the American taxpayers. We

tax the taxpayers to get their money, and then this money is spent for

the reconstruction of Iraq--a country, incidentally, which we did not

destroy. We are reconstructing facilities that we did not damage, such

as roads, bridges, the electric grid, and dams. We didn't target them.

We didn't destroy them. Now we are told that we must reconstruct them

with American taxpayers' money--a position that I voted against, a

position that I think is absurd--in a country with the second largest

reserves in the world, Iraq, next only to Saudi Arabia, which ought to

be able, in my judgment, to sell the oil that it produces to

reconstruct itself.

For that country to rely, as the President insists it must, on

American taxpayers' funds for reconstruction is absurd. But,

nonetheless, that is what happened. The majority of this Congress

decided they wanted to spend nearly $20 billion of American taxpayers'

money to do that. Now we see at least part of the result of it, and

there will be more. But the signal this Congress ought to send is one

of accountability and demanding through public hearings and a thorough

investigation. Can we not be as aggressive as the auditors in the

Defense Department? Can we not at least express the same concern that

auditors in the Defense Department express about the potential of our

being bilked out of hundreds of millions of dollars? That is the least

the American taxpayer should expect from this Congress.

I think this Congress has not heard the last of this. I and others

will be on this floor attempting to demand investigative hearings. The

taxpayers, in my judgment, deserve hearings on these subjects.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.