

are not in a wartime situation while they are being trained. The people in Iraq are being trained and fighting at the same time. They need more than training, they need combat capability that is nonexistent on their part.

That is a democracy that is less than 4 years old. Their constitution is less than 18 months old. The Iraqi Army and the police force, 4 years ago, was there to support the dictator, not democracy. So if you expect, from the ashes of the dictatorship, a functioning democracy in 4 years, I think you are sadly mistaken. It took us 11 years to write our own Constitution.

Why am I hopeful that we can still win in Iraq? No. 1, there is evidence with the new strategy that we can defeat and destroy al-Qaida in Iraq. No. 2, every time an Iraqi soldier is killed or a policeman is murdered, someone takes their place. Every time a judge is assassinated, somebody else comes along and says, "I'll be a judge." What more can you ask? We are losing troops, and it is heartbreaking. The enemy that we are fighting understands that Americans don't like the taste of war—and that is an asset, not a liability. We are not a warring people. It is not our nature as a people to go to other places and take land from people and dominate their life. It is our nature to allow people to chart their own destiny and to be partners economically, while the enemy wants no part of that.

So what I hope we will do is take these amendments that will come to the floor and ask ourselves one simple question: If this amendment passes, what affect does it have on our military commanders to execute this new strategy that is clearly working? If this amendment passes, how does it affect al-Qaida in Iraq and throughout the world? What affect would it have on the voices of moderation that are giving their own lives to change their own country in Iraq? If this amendment passes, how does it affect Iran?

The one thing I learned from this last trip is that al-Qaida overplayed their hand, and we are taking advantage of it. Iran is trying to destabilize Iraq now more than ever. Don't mistake these new alliances between coalition forces and Sunni Iraqis to be a political reconciliation. The bad news from my trip is that the Iraqi Government is paralyzed, the political leadership in Iraq—Sunni, Shia, and Kurd—are unable to get their act together at this point. New elections would be good for the Sunnis.

Mr. President, how much time do I have?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Twenty seconds.

Mr. GRAHAM. We will talk more about this. The good news is, the surge is al-Qaida's worst nightmare. They have been rejected by the Sunnis in Iraq, and if we stay on them, we can destroy al-Qaida in Iraq. The bad news is, the current political infrastructure in Iraq is incapable of making the hard

decisions for the moment. We have to think of new ways to push them.

There is much more to follow.

I yield the floor.

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

TRIBUTE TO ALEX GEORGE, SR.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise for a brief period of time to pay tribute to a Pennsylvanian who just passed away this past week, a constituent of mine whose family I have known for many years. I think he is like a lot of people in our communities and in our States who lead lives of service and struggle and achievement, and often their lives are not the subject of big stories and headlines.

When I think of Alex George, Sr.—who is the father of Bill George, or William George, who is the president of the AFL-CIO in Pennsylvania—I think of those people who grew up in parts of western Pennsylvania, where over many generations steel was the foundation of the economy, and in places like where Mr. George lived, Aliquippa, PA, which is a very strong community that had a thriving steel industry that is now largely gone from the city and that community. It is not nearly what it was when thousands of people were employed.

Alex George, like a lot of Pennsylvanians and, frankly, a lot of Americans, lived a life of triumph where he had to overcome difficulties in his own life, and then he became a union leader of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steelworkers, which was the fore-runner, of course, of the modern day Steelworkers Union that his son, Bill George, joined many years later. We think of his life today and what he did for the labor movement of western Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania generally, and also what he did as a law enforcement officer. He was a police officer as well in his later years.

I rise briefly to pay tribute to him and his life of work for the benefit of labor, doing everything possible to make sure they have lives that are rewarded, in the sense that they are allowed to organize and allowed to have the opportunity to have the dignity of their labor be part of the fabric of their lives. We pay tribute to Alex George today and the many others who built the middle class in America. He is the proud son of Aliquippa, PA.

In a special way, I express my condolences to the entire George family, and especially Bill George, president of the AFL-CIO of Pennsylvania. Alex George leaves behind three sons: Bill, who I have mentioned, Robert, and Alex, Jr., as well as nine grandchildren and many great-grandchildren. In the spirit of condolence, but also in the spirit of tribute, I pay tribute to Alex George and the legacy he leaves behind for the George family and for the labor family of Pennsylvania.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. 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.

MILITARY READINESS CHALLENGES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, our country is home to some of the finest fighting forces in the world, and we can all be very proud of that fact. We need our military to be the best trained, the best equipped, and the most prepared force on the planet. Tragically, however, the President's war in Iraq and his use of extended deployments is undermining our military's readiness today.

The current deployment schedule hurts our ability to respond to threats around the world, it causes our servicemembers to leave the military service early, it weakens our ability to respond to disasters at home, it unfairly burdens family members, and it intensifies the combat stress our servicemembers experience.

We need to rebuild our military, and the first step is giving our fighting men and women the time they need at home to prepare and train for their next mission.

Today I rise to address the readiness challenges that threaten our military strength and ultimately our Nation's security.

More than 4 years into the war in Iraq, our troops are stretched thin, our equipment is deteriorating, and the patience of our Nation is wearing thin. We have seen 3,600 servicemembers die, thousands upon thousands more have been injured, and month after month our fighting men and women are pushing harder and harder. Troops leave loved ones for months and years and put their lives on the line without complaint. We owe them the best treatment and the best training possible.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration has fallen short in those areas. One of the major problems for our troops, for their families, and their communities is the growing gap between the time troops spend in battle versus the time they spend at home. This gap is alarming, it is disheartening, and it is a disservice to the brave men and women who put themselves in harm's way each and every day.

Sadly, our forces are being burned out. Many of our troops are on their third or even their fourth tour in Iraq and Afghanistan. Months ago, the Department of Defense announced that their tours would be extended from 12 months to 15 months. And on top of all that, they are not receiving the necessary time at home before they are sent back to battle.

Mr. President, that is not the normal schedule. It is not what our troops signed up for. And we here in Congress should not simply stand by and allow our troops to be pushed beyond their limits. That is why here on the Senate floor today we are debating the Webb amendment, and that is why we need to pass it this week.

Traditionally, Active-Duty troops are deployed for 1 year and then they rest at home for 2 years. National Guard and Reserve troops are deployed for 1 year and then they rest at home for 5 years. Tragically, that is not what is happening today. Today, Active-Duty troops are spending less time at home than they are in battle—less time at home than they are in battle—and our Guard and Reserve forces are receiving less than 3 years' rest for every year in combat.

With that increasing number and length of deployments, this rest time is even more critical for our troops, and they are not receiving the break they need, which is increasing the chances that they will burn out. This administration—the Bush administration—has decided to go the other direction, pushing our troops harder, extending their time abroad, and sending troops back time and again to the battlefield.

In March of this year, a few months ago, Salon.com reported what I hope is an extreme example of the length the military is going to get our soldiers back to the battlefield, and I want to read an excerpt from that story because I think it is really important we all understand what is happening to our troops.

This is from Salon.com:

Last November, Army Specialist Edgar Hernandez, a communications specialist with a unit of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, had surgery on an ankle he had injured during physical training. After the surgery, doctors put his leg in a cast and he was supposed to start physical therapy when the cast came off six weeks later.

But two days after his cast was removed, Army commanders decided it was more important to send him to a training site in a remote desert rather than let him stay at Fort Benning, GA, to rehabilitate. In January, Hernandez was shipped to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA, where his unit, the 3,900-strong 3rd Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, was conducting a month of training in anticipation of leaving for Iraq in March.

Hernandez says he was in no shape to train for a war so soon after his injury. "I could not walk," he told Salon in an interview. He said he was amazed when he learned he was being sent to California. "Did they not realize that I'm hurt and I needed this physical therapy?" he remembered thinking. I was told by my doctor and my physical therapist that this was crazy.

Hernandez had served two tours in Iraq, where he had helped maintain communications gear in the unit's armored Bradley Fighting Vehicles. But he could not participate in war maneuvers conducted on a 1,000-square-mile mock battlefield located in the harsh Mojave Desert. Instead, when he got to California, he was led to a large tent where he would be housed. He was shocked by what he saw inside. There were dozens of other hurt soldiers. Some were on crutches, and

others had their arms in slings. Some had debilitating back injuries. And nearby was another tent housing female soldiers with health issues ranging from injuries to pregnancy.

Hernandez is one of a dozen soldiers who stayed for weeks in those tents who were interviewed for this report, some of whose medical records were also reviewed by Salon. All of the soldiers said they had no business being sent to Fort Irwin given their physical condition. In some cases, soldiers were sent there even though their injuries were so severe the doctors had previously recommended they should be considered for medical retirement from the Army.

Military experts say they suspect that the deployment to Fort Irwin of injured soldiers was an effort to pump up manpower statistics used to show the readiness of Army units.

Clearly, if the military is going to those lengths to pump up readiness statistics, we have a huge problem. But these problems are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the effects of the administration's rotation policy. The current rotation policy not only burns out servicemembers, but it hurts the military's ability to respond to other potential threats.

For the first time in decades, the Army's "ready brigade," which is intended to enter troubled spots within 72 hours, cannot do so. All of its troops are in Iraq and Afghanistan. The limited period between deployments lessens the time to train for other threats.

Numerous military leaders have spoken to us about this problem. GEN James Conway said:

I think my largest concern, probably, has to do with training. When we're home for that 7, 8, 9 months, our focus is going back to Iraq. And as I mentioned in the opening statement, therefore, we're not doing amphibious training, we're not doing mountain-warfare training, we're not doing combined-arm fire maneuver, such as would need to be the case potentially in another type of contingency.

That is not me, Mr. President; that is General Conway before the Senate Armed Services Committee in February of this year.

GEN Barry McCaffrey said that because all "fully combat ready" Active-Duty and Reserve combat units are now deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan, "no fully-trained national strategic reserve brigades are now prepared to deploy to new combat operations."

The current deployment situation is hurting our troops, and it is hurting our troops in another way. It is contributing to a drop in our retention rates. Keeping battle-experienced and capable troops in the military is essential to our ability to respond to future threats. West Point classes of 2000 and 2001 have an attrition rate five times higher than pre-Iraq war levels, with 54 percent of the West Point class of 2000 leaving the Army by the end of last year and 46 percent of the West Point class of 2001 leaving the Army by the end of last year. Marine Corps Active Forces are losing troops, especially critical midgrade noncommissioned officers, and that is despite a bonus for those who reenlist.

Clearly, this policy is not sustainable.

This deployment schedule we have been talking about is also making us less secure here at home. The rotation policy has left our Guard units short of manpower and supplies and severely hindered their ability to respond to disasters that can occur at any time here at home.

The recent tornado that destroyed much of Greensburg, KS, is a terrible example. After their town was destroyed, Greensburg residents needed shelter, they needed food and water, and they needed it fast. But because the Kansas National Guard was stretched so thin, it was hard for them to respond as fast as was necessary for an emergency right here at home. Governor Sebelius and MG Tod Bunting, who is the head of the Kansas National Guard, said not only is Guard equipment being worn out, but so are its troops, some of whom were in their fourth tour in Iraq.

For years, these problems were the exception, not the rule. But I fear that balance is shifting. Last month, USA Today reported that National Guard units in 31 States say 4 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan have left them with 60 percent or less of their authorized equipment. And last month, LTC Steven Blum said the National Guard units have 53 percent of the equipment they need to handle State emergencies, and that number falls to 49 percent once Guard equipment needed for war, such as weapons, is factored in.

In fact, Blum said:

Our problem right now is that our equipment is at an all-time low.

This is deeply concerning to all of us who worry about a national disaster in our States, especially out in the West as we now face fires in our forests that are threatening homes and families and lives, and we fear extreme devastation.

This problem is more than about equipment, it is more than about retention rates, it is about real people and about real families. We all know military life can be tough on troops and their families. They go for months—sometimes years—without seeing each other. While troops are away fighting for all of us, sons and daughters are born, sons and daughters grow up without their moms and dads present, husbands and wives don't see each other for years, fathers die, mothers die, and family members become sick. Our troops need adequate time at home to see their newborns, to be a part of their children's lives, to spend time with their spouses, and to see their parents. The current rotation policy decreases dramatically the time families are together, and that places a tremendous strain on everyone.

Our troops facing these early deployments and extended tours have spoken out. When the tour extensions and early deployments were announced, our troops themselves expressed their displeasure.

In Georgia, according to the Atlanta Journal Constitution:

Soldiers of a Georgia Army National Guard unit were hoping to return home in April. Instead, they may be spending another grueling summer in the Iraqi desert. At least 4,000 National Guard soldiers may spend up to four extra months in Iraq as part of President Bush's troop increase announced last month. SGT Gary Heffner, spokesman for the 214th, said news of the extension came as a "little bit of a shock" to the Georgians.

The 1st Cavalry Division, according to the Dallas Morning News:

Eighteen months after their first Iraqi rotation, the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment and the last of the Fort Hood, Texas-based 1st Cavalry Division returned to Iraq in mid-November.

Those troops, according to this article, were deeply concerned about that. And here in my home State, in Tacoma, WA, just this past weekend, there was an article from the Tacoma News Tribune of soldiers going once again.

These soldiers are talking about the tremendously difficult time they are having being redeployed.

So, Mr. President, I rise today to speak out for the Webb amendment. It is an amendment that supports our troops. It supports our troops by requiring that regular forces be at home for as long as they are deployed. It requires that our National Guard and Reserve forces be home for at least 3 years for every year deployed. Those seem to me to be basic commonsense requirements.

I applaud our colleague from Virginia for being a champion for our troops and for crafting the bipartisan measure of which he and I think the entire Senate can be proud.

Our troops have sacrificed so much for us. We have to institute a fair policy for the health of our troops, for the health and well-being of their families, and for our Nation's security and the ability to respond to disasters here at home. The Webb amendment does all of that, and I urge the Senate to adopt it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the full Salon.com article and the article from the Tacoma News Tribune.

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

[From salon.com, Mar. 26, 2007]

ARMY DEPLOYED SERIOUSLY INJURED TROOPS
(By Mark Benjamin)

WASHINGTON.—Last November, Army Spc. Edgar Hernandez, a communications specialist with a unit of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, had surgery on an ankle he had injured during physical training. After the surgery, doctors put his leg in a cast, and he was supposed to start physical therapy when that cast came off six weeks later.

But two days after his cast was removed, Army commanders decided it was more important to send him to a training site in a remote desert rather than let him stay at Fort Benning, Ga., to rehabilitate. In January, Hernandez was shipped to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., where his unit, the 3,900-strong 3rd Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, was conducting a month of training in anticipation of leaving for Iraq in March.

Hernandez says he was in no shape to train for war so soon after his injury. "I could not

walk," he told Salon in an interview. He said he was amazed when he learned he was being sent to California. "Did they not realize that I'm hurt and I needed this physical therapy?" he remembered thinking. "I was told by my doctor and my physical therapist that this was crazy."

Hernandez had served two tours in Iraq, where he helped maintain communications gear in the unit's armored Bradley Fighting Vehicles. But he could not participate in war maneuvers conducted on a 1,000-square-mile mock battlefield located in the harsh Mojave Desert. Instead, when he got to California, he was led to a large tent where he would be housed. He was shocked by what he saw inside: There were dozens of other hurt soldiers. Some were on crutches, and others had arms in slings. Some had debilitating back injuries. And nearby was another tent, housing female soldiers with health issues ranging from injuries to pregnancy.

Hernandez is one of a dozen soldiers who stayed for weeks in those tents who were interviewed for this report, some of whose medical records were also reviewed by Salon. All of the soldiers said they had no business being sent to Fort Irwin given their physical condition. In some cases, soldiers were sent there even though their injuries were so severe that doctors had previously recommended they should be considered for medical retirement from the Army.

Military experts say they suspect that the deployment to Fort Irwin of injured soldiers was an effort to pump up manpower statistics used to show the readiness of Army units. With the military increasingly strained after four years of war, Army readiness has become a critical part of the debate over Iraq. Some congressional Democrats have considered plans to limit the White House's ability to deploy more troops unless the Pentagon can certify that units headed into the fray are fully equipped and fully manned.

Salon recently uncovered another troubling development in the Army's efforts to shore up troop levels, reporting earlier this month that soldiers from the 3rd Brigade had serious health problems that the soldiers claimed were summarily downgraded by military doctors at Fort Benning in February, apparently so that the Army could send them to Iraq. Some of those soldiers were among the group sent to Fort Irwin to train in January.

After arriving at Fort Irwin, many of the injured soldiers did not train. "They had all of us living in a big tent," confirmed Spc. Lincoln Smith, who spent the month there along with Hernandez and others. Smith is an Army truck driver, but because of his health issues, which include sleep apnea (a breathing ailment) and narcolepsy, Smith is currently barred from driving military vehicles. "I couldn't go out and do the training," Smith said about his time in California. His records list his problems as "permanent" and recommend that he be considered for retirement from the Army because of his health.

Another soldier with nearly 20 years in the Army was sent to Fort Irwin, ostensibly to prepare for deployment to Iraq, even though she suffers from back problems and has psychiatric issues. Doctors wrote "unable to deploy overseas" on her medical records.

It is unclear exactly how many soldiers with health issues were sent to the California desert. None of the soldiers interviewed by Salon had done a head count, but all agreed that "dozens" would be a conservative estimate. An Army spokesman and public affairs officials for the 3rd Infantry Division did not return repeated calls and e-mails seeking further detail and an explanation of why injured troops were sent to

Fort Irwin and housed in tents there during January.

The soldiers who were at Fort Irwin described a pitiful scene. "You had people out there with crutches and canes," said an Army captain who was being considered for medical retirement himself because of serious back injuries sustained in a Humvee accident during a previous combat tour in Iraq. "Soldiers that apparently had no business being there were there," another soldier wrote to Salon in an e-mail. "Pregnant females were sent to the National Training Center rotation" with the knowledge of Army leaders, she said.

One infantry sergeant with nearly 20 years in the Army who had already fought in Iraq broke his foot badly in a noncombat incident just before being sent to Fort Irwin. "I didn't even get to put the cast on," before going, he said with exasperation. He said doctors put something like an "open-toed soft shoe" on his foot and put him on a plane to California. "I've got the cast on now. I never even got a chance to see the [medical] specialist," he claimed. The infantry sergeant said life in the desert was tough in his condition. "I was on Percocet. I couldn't even concentrate. I hopped on a plane and hobbled around NTC on crutches," he said. He added, "I saw people who were worse off than I am. I saw people with hurt backs and so on. I started to think, 'Hey, I'm not so bad.'"

[From the (Tacoma, WA) News Tribune, July 10, 2007]

**"IT'S TOUGH" TO LEAVE FAMILIES AGAIN
MEDICAL TROOPS OFF TO IRAQ—MANY FOR
THEIR THIRD TOUR**

(By Steve Maynard)

Buoyed by praise and cheers, about 400 soldiers from the 62nd Medical Brigade at Fort Lewis got ready Monday to deploy to Iraq.

The Army brigade of medics, nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers and other medical personnel will make its third tour of duty in the Middle East, where they will be spread across several locations in Iraq.

The first wave of soldiers leaves Saturday for 15 months—longer than their previous tours. This spring, the Pentagon extended most combat deployments from 12 to 15 months. While some are going to the war zone for the first time, this will be the third trip for Staff Sgt. Benjamin Hernandez.

"It's tough, especially leaving my family again," said Hernandez, 33. He and his wife, Julieanna, have a daughter, 5, and a son, 7.

His children are older now and realize the dangers of combat. "They're more cognizant of what's going on," Hernandez said.

During Monday's ceremony at the Soldier's Field House, the maroon colors of the brigade were cased, or covered. They'll be uncased when the first soldiers arrive in Iraq.

Members of the brigade will be leaving through the end of November. The headquarters will be at Camp Victory near Baghdad.

During the 35-minute ceremony, an audience of several hundred family members and other soldiers broke into applause repeatedly.

The crowd was quick to cheer when Brig. Gen. Sheila Baxter asked for a round of applause for "these great soldiers."

"The mission going forward is still complex and the enemy is still dangerous," said Baxter, commander of Madigan Army Medical Center. "We are certain of your success and we are grateful for your brave service."

"We pray for your safety," Baxter said.

Sgt. Kelly Perryman, 26, and her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Tremayne Perryman, 30, will both be going to Iraq, but the two medics don't know if they'll be based near each other.

Kelly Perryman summed up her feelings for her second trip to Iraq in one word: nervous.

Their 4-month-old baby boy, Jeffrey, will stay with her mother in Detroit.

"This will be our first time being apart," Kelly Perryman said about her baby. "That's kind of scary."

Sgt. Derek Trubia, 32, said he was ready for his first tour in Iraq.

"I have no problem," Trubia said. "I expected it."

The brigade, which served in Iraq in 2003 and Kuwait in 2004-05, plays a life-saving role for U.S. and Iraqi soldiers through trauma care and surgery.

Among its other specialties are dental health, preventive medicine and stress control.

In his invocation, Chaplain Maj. Mark Mitera prayed for "healing and hope for those they treat."

He offered thanks "for supplying these soldiers with strength for war and skill for battle."

Col. Patrick Sargent, brigade commander, noted in an interview that U.S. soldiers are more spread out in Iraq, and the numbers of casualties and injuries are rising. Besides treating physical wounds, the brigade will care for the mental health of injured soldiers and its own members who witness trauma, he said.

"We will face adversity, danger," Sargent told the crowd.

But he said the brigade is fully trained and will prevail.

"The soldiers standing before you today embody the essence of patriotism," Sargent said.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that immediately following my remarks, the Senator from Hawaii, Mr. AKAKA, might be recognized for such time as he may consume.

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

Mr. McCAIN. And I would like to thank the Senator from Hawaii for his patience and his courtesy.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1585, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Nelson of Nebraska (for Levin) amendment No. 2011, in the nature of a substitute.

Webb amendment No. 2012 (to amendment No. 2011), to specify minimum periods between deployment of units and members of

the Armed Forces for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Nelson of Florida amendment No. 2013 (to amendment No. 2012), to change the enactment date.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, again, I would like to thank my old friend from Hawaii for his patience so that, as the Republican ranking member of the committee, I may make a statement about the bill itself and about the situation in Iraq. I thank him for his courtesy, and I will try not to take too long a period of time. So I thank my old friend from Hawaii.

Mr. President, we have reached another moment of importance this week in debating the fiscal year 2008 Defense authorization bill. We will help set the course of the Nation's security policy and influence our participation in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Much of the debate, as we all know, will be about Iraq, and before I discuss that and my recent visit, I would note that many provisions in this bill constitute a good defense policy and will strengthen the ability of our country to defend itself.

Under the leadership of my good friend from Michigan, the chairman of the committee, Senator LEVIN, I think we have crafted an excellent piece of legislation. I think a testament to his leadership is that the committee voted unanimously to report the bill, and it fully funds the President's \$648 billion defense budget request. It provides necessary measures to try to bring under control waste, fraud, and abuse in defense procurement, and, frankly, it makes Members more accountable for their spending in the earmark process.

Again, I thank Senator LEVIN, the subcommittee chairs, and all the committee members for their work in bringing this issue to the floor.

Very briefly, we have authorized a 3.5-percent, across-the-board pay raise for all military personnel. We have increased Army and Marine end strength to 525,400 and 189,000, respectively. The committee also approved \$2.7 billion for items on the Army Chief of Staff's unfunded requirement list, including \$775 million for reactive armor and other Stryker requirements, \$207 million for aviation survivability equipment, \$102 million for combat training centers and funding for explosive ordnance disposal equipment, night vision devices, and machine guns.

The bill also authorizes \$4.1 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, known as MRAP vehicles, for all of the Services' known requirements.

The committee has come up with the money to support our troops, and I have no doubt the full Senate will follow step.

Money and policy statements are not all that is required at this moment in our national history. Courage is required—courage, not the great courage exhibited by the brave men and women

fighting today in Iraq and Afghanistan, but a smaller measure: the courage necessary to put our country's interests before every personal or political consideration.

In this light, I would like to discuss America's involvement in Iraq, and finally I would like to make several points.

Final reinforcements needed to implement General Petraeus's counterinsurgency tactics arrived just several weeks ago. Last week I had the opportunity to visit with troops in theater. From what I saw and heard while there, I believe our military, in cooperation with the Iraqi security forces, is making progress in a number of areas. There are other areas where they are not. I would like to outline some of their efforts, not to argue that these areas have suddenly become safe—they have not; I want to emphasize the areas have not become safe—but to illustrate the progress our military has achieved under General Petraeus's new strategy.

Last year Anbar Province was believed to be lost to al-Qaida. On the map we see that U.S. and Iraqi troops cleaned out al-Qaida fighters from Ramadi and other areas of western Anbar. Tribal sheiks broke with the terrorists and joined the coalition side. It is a fact that some 16 out of the 24 sheiks in the Sunni area of Anbar Province have now joined with U.S. forces in their commitment to destroy al-Qaida in Anbar Province.

Ramadi, months ago, was Iraq's most dangerous city. It is now one of its safest. At considerable political risk, I point out that I visited, with Senator GRAHAM, downtown Ramadi where the shopping areas were open. I did not visit without protection or without security forces with me. But the fact is, a short time ago it was one of the most dangerous cities in all of Iraq. Attacks are down from 30 to 35 a day in February to zero on most days now.

In Fallujah, Iraqi police have established numerous stations and have divided the city into gated districts. The violence has declined and local intelligence tips have proliferated. Throughout Anbar Province, thousands of young men are signing up for the police and Army, and the locals are taking the fight to al-Qaida. All 18 major tribes in the province are now onboard with the security plan. A year from now, the Iraqi Army and police could have total control of security in Ramadi, allowing American forces to safely draw down.

South of Baghdad, operation Phantom Thunder is intended to stop insurgents present in the Baghdad belts from originating attacks in the capital itself. A brigade of the 10th Mountain Division, which I visited, is operating in Baghdad belts that have been havens for al-Qaida. All soldiers in the brigade are living forward. That means they are in outposts away from the headquarters 24-7, living, working, and fighting alongside Iraqi military. Commanders report that the local sheiks