

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3256

To provide for the issuance of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Exceptional Public Service Award to journalists who accompanied units of the United States Armed Forces or coalition partners into Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, a process referred to as “embedding”, in order to provide first-hand and timely reports on the progress of the United States and coalition forces and the liberation of the Iraqi people.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 7, 2003

Mr. ROHRABACHER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

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1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. RECOGNITION OF JOURNALISTS EMBEDDED**
2 **WITH UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES OR**
3 **COALITION PARTNERS IN IRAQ DURING OP-**
4 **ERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

6 (1) The First Amendment to the Constitution
7 of the United States establishes the right to free
8 speech and a press unfettered by Government inter-
9 ference and reflected the belief of the American peo-
10 ple that an informed public is essential to the sur-
11 vival of democracy.

12 (2) The press, in all its forms today, informs
13 the public on news events in the United States and
14 elsewhere in the world and acts as a check on exces-
15 sive Government actions by facilitating feedback to
16 the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of
17 Government.

18 (3) Journalists first began serving as war cor-
19 respondents during the Crimean War in 1854, and,
20 by the next decade, more than 500 journalists cov-
21 ered the activities of the contending armies during
22 the American Civil War, capturing the interest of
23 Americans in the conflict and establishing the tradi-
24 tion of newspaper readership in America.

25 (4) During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the De-
26 partment of Defense provided journalists with the

1 opportunity to actually accompany units of the
2 United States Armed Forces and coalition partners,
3 a process referred to as “embedding”, in order to
4 provide first-hand and timely reports on the progress
5 of the United States and coalition forces and the lib-
6 eration of the Iraqi people.

7 (5) Approximately 700 print, broadcast, and
8 Internet journalists chose to receive the special
9 training offered by the Department of Defense to
10 prepare for the dangers and hardships of accom-
11 panying troops in possible combat and embedded
12 themselves with units of the United States Armed
13 Forces or coalition partners.

14 (6) Journalists have often worked under censor-
15 ship in the past, but the embedded journalists were
16 free to cover the conflict without interference from
17 the military, and provided generally accurate ac-
18 counts despite the omnipresent “fog of war” on a
19 real-time basis for the first time in history.

20 (7) The relationship between journalists and
21 the military has often been strained in times of war,
22 but the conflict in Iraq proved that both sides could
23 meet their individual goals without restricting or im-
24 peding the other.

1 (8) Many of the embedded journalists made
2 their satellite phones and email available to members
3 of the Armed Forces who were able to communicate
4 with their families for the first time in weeks and
5 sometimes months.

6 (9) Friends and families of members of the
7 Armed Forces serving in Iraq in units that included
8 an embedded journalist were able to track the
9 progress of these units and were often reassured
10 that their loved ones were still alive because of the
11 journalist's reports.

12 (10) The embedded journalists, while in-theater,
13 endured the same privations as the members of the
14 Armed Forces they covered and risked possible im-
15 prisonment, torture, and execution if captured by
16 Iraqi forces.

17 (11) The embedded journalists braved excessive
18 and sometimes fatal weather conditions, including
19 horrific sandstorms that reduce visibility to four or
20 five feet and temperatures higher than 130 degrees
21 Fahrenheit, but still filed their dispatches each day.

22 (12) At least 14 journalists have died while cov-
23 ering the conflict in Iraq, and other journalists have
24 died in Afghanistan.

1 (13) The American people are best served by a
2 robust and competitive media that provides accurate
3 and fair accounts of United States Armed Forces
4 wherever they may be.

5 (b) OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF EMBEDDED JOUR-
6 NALISTS.—The Secretary of Defense shall award the Of-
7 fice of the Secretary of Defense Exceptional Public Service
8 Award to journalists who were authorized by the Depart-
9 ment of Defense to accompany, and actually accompanied
10 into Iraq, a unit of the United States Armed Forces or
11 of a coalition partner during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

12 (c) POSTHUMOUS AWARD.—If a person entitled to
13 the Office of the Secretary of Defense Exceptional Public
14 Service Award under subsection (b) died while serving in
15 Iraq or dies before the issuance of the award, the award
16 shall be provided to the person’s representative, as des-
17 ignated by the Secretary.

18 (d) AVAILABILITY OF APPROPRIATIONS.—The Sec-
19 retary may expend, from any appropriation for contingent
20 expenses of the Department of Defense, amounts nec-
21 essary to provide Office of the Secretary of Defense Ex-
22 ceptional Public Service Awards under subsection (b).

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