

evaluation (OPEVAL). The OPEVAL report awarded the best possible grade to the Super Hornet, calling it "operationally effective and operationally suitable." In addition, the report recommended the aircraft's introduction into the fleet.

Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Jay Johnson, stated "The F/A-18E/F Super Hornet is the cornerstone of the future of naval aviation. The superb performance demonstrated throughout its comprehensive operational evaluation was just what we expected and confirms why we can't wait to get it to the fleet!"

Air Test and Evaluation Squadron Nine (VX-9) at China Lake, Calif., flew 1,233 hours in over 850 sorties and expended more than 400,000 pounds of ordnance in the Super Hornet during nearly six months of flights. The 23-member aircrew tested the aircraft in a complex variety of tactical missions representing the operational arena.

The Navy's Program Executive Officer for Tactical Aircraft Programs, Rear Adm. Jeffrey A. Cook commented, "This is the best news the Navy's carrier forces have received in a long time. It will ensure that throughout the next twenty years the fleet will be capable of countering the evolving threat. My congratulations to the Navy's Operational Test and Evaluation Command, the men and women of VX-9, and the entire naval aviation systems team." The purpose of the OPEVAL was to test the aircraft in a realistic fleet setting to determine its operational effectiveness as a weapon system, and its suitability to be maintained and operated by the Navy. No new deficiencies were found and the report validated the aircraft's superior capabilities.

"I'm really excited about the results," said Capt. James B. Godwin III, F/A-18 program manager, "and we got the best grade possible from OPEVAL—operationally effective and operationally suitable. This report confirmed that the Super Hornet is a very mature product. We have been recommended for full fleet introduction."

The OPEVAL report specifically cited the aircraft's key enhancing features—growth, bringback, survivability, range and payload—as qualities relative to current fleet operational capabilities. The successful completion of OPEVAL continues the Super Hornet along the road to a milestone III decision, and then approval to start full-rate production and multi-year procurement.

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CRITICAL TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to take a special order at a very critical time in the peace process in Northern Ireland. I have asked a number of my colleagues to join me tonight, but at this late hour, I am not sure that they will. But in the event that they do, I would like to yield them time, because so many of us have for so long worked so hard to help support this fairly difficult and "fairly difficult" would be an understatement, this extremely difficult process.

The news today is that the British Government has reimposed its sovereignty over Northern Ireland. After about a 2-year process of working and

compromise and difficult negotiation, an agreement was reached and the Northern Ireland government took control of its own destiny in December of this past year.

Now, because of a crisis that has been precipitated over the issue of disarmament, the British Government has reimposed its will and has re-extended its authority over Northern Ireland. There is a question, Mr. Speaker, over the constitutionality and the legality of that action, but nonetheless it is fait accompli and home rule has been taken back away and Britain is now again in control of Northern Ireland governmentally.

That is a tragedy. After all these days and months and weeks of hard work and prayer and negotiation, we are back almost to where we started from. Reg Empey who was a unionist leader under David Trimble who is the Unionist Party leader, said today that the entire agreement now must be renegotiated, not just the issue of decommissioning or disarming but the Patten Commission which determines the reforms in the police, and the police is a major issue in terms of civil rights and justice in Northern Ireland, they say that will have to be renegotiated.

The cross border agreements between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland would have to be renegotiated. The Parades Commission, which oversees the licensing, the authorization of these parades that occur between and among the two traditions in Northern Ireland, that will have to be renegotiated.

This makes it next to impossible to get the genie back in the bottle. David Trimble, the first deputy or prime minister of this new government, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his actions in this. He has taken many chances to make this process go forward. Against great opposition within his own party and at certain times maybe today he leads a minority of the Ulster Unionist Party in support of the Good Friday Agreement. Nonetheless, his decision to tender his resignation prior to the completion of the Good Friday Agreement has precipitated this crisis.

□ 2115

It was a reaction to his own internal party strife, there is no question, but in order to make this work, it requires that all the leaders lead from the front, and it is pretty obvious that the rank and file of the party are in control right now.

Seamus Mallon of the SDLP party, who is the second in the government in a multi-party government, has said it was a mistake for Great Britain to take power back, to put the duly-elected government on the shelf. I agree with him. But, again, it is fait accompli. It has happened. So Mr. Mallon would like all the parties, the British, the Irish Republic, the political leaders of Northern Ireland, and I think the leadership of this country, to

reengage quickly and resolve this and close the gap as quickly as possible.

Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, said at the beginning that he questioned the legality of Great Britain's action, and also the logic and common sense of this action. We have entered into a void, and no one knows how to come back out. There is no legal framework, there is no guidepath, there are no maps to getting us out of this quandary we are in in Northern Ireland.

David Irvine, the leader of the Progressive Unionists, said this is far more dangerous than anyone knows. Those words, Mr. Speaker, are chilling when you consider the 30 years we have just come through in Northern Ireland.

This has great meaning to the American public. Millions and millions and millions of Americans claim their heritage beginning in Ireland. This has been watched with great interest and great support among the American public at large, among the Members of Congress of both parties, by our President, who has shown great leadership, and by Senator George Mitchell, who has provided the glue to make this stay together.

So now we are at a point where all the parties, all the players, have pretty much laid their cards out on the table. The IRA, the Irish Republican Army, they had declared a cease-fire 5 years ago; 5 years ago. There has been no breaking of that cease-fire, there has been no sectarian violence perpetrated by the Irish Republican Army. They have not responded to Protestant attacks on Catholics, Loyalist attacks on Republican Nationalist citizens in Northern Ireland, and there have been many. There have been many murders, and we have read about them, but they have not responded. They have shown great discipline.

They agreed to participate in the International Commission on Decommissioning. They made public statements that the war is over, that they support the political institutions, that there is nothing to fear from the IRA in this peace process. They have shown support, they have shown discipline, they have supported peace, they have engaged in it, and they have engaged in negotiation.

The latest statement by the IRA, albeit too late to prevent this from happening, made a very clear statement, understood clearly by the British government, the Irish Republican government, the political parties in the north and in this country, that they were committed to a process with clarity and definition and time lines.

Unfortunately, they have had a penchant throughout this process of saying just enough a little bit too late, and, in this case, it gave the nihilists, the anti's within the Unionist Party, a reason to close the deal and break off the deal.

It is terribly unfortunate. Mr. Mandelson, the Secretary of State for the Blair government in Northern Ireland, has done a good job. He just

lacked persistence. He moved too quickly to accommodate the Unionist demands, and, like any kid knows, it is a lot easier to take a bicycle apart than it is to put it back together again. It looks like he made a mistake, and it gets harder and harder to get the wheels and the chain back on the bicycle.

Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, has been a true leader. Today, this evening, tomorrow, he has got to show that leadership, and he has got to show courage, and he has got to be forceful, because the British government is the patron of the Unionist Party. The Unionist Party wants allegiance with Great Britain, Great Britain has to be the lead government in getting the Unionists back to the table.

The Unionists, for their part, precipitated this crisis, not the IRA. Yes, they did make the jump in forming the Executive, 18 months too late, and only then just for a few weeks, but they did make the jump. Unfortunately, they did it with preconditions. Again, going outside of the initial Good Friday Agreement that 90 percent of the people on the island of Ireland supported, 90 percent.

They pressured their leader, David Trimble, into setting an artificial deadline. And I just wonder if Jeffrey Donaldson must be proud of the disruption that he has wrought? Ken McGinnis and John Taylor, two Unionists who have worked with Mr. Trimble all the way through, need to be bold, and they need to stand up and they need to take leadership in support of Mr. Trimble and getting the Unionists back on track.

This government can be put together again, but time is our enemy. The Irish government of the Republic of Ireland, led by Bertie Ahern, their view is that the British should have waited. There is no constitutional precedent for taking power back once it has been devolved, as they did in Scotland and Wales. Again, there is no map, there is no plan, there is no legal precedent for this. Bertie Ahern has been brilliant, but it is time to be strong. If this situation is not fixed soon, a vacuum is created, and throughout Ireland's history whenever a vacuum existed, violence fills the void.

As my teachers in school used to say, an idle time is the devil's workshop. Ahern must insist that the British move quickly to close the gap. The partnership between the Republic of Ireland and the government of Great Britain has been essential. The two leaders, Blair and Ahern, have guided this process along with our President and the political leaders in the north to this point. They have to reimpose their will and take control of the situation.

The United States' role, I am joined today by Congressman Peter King, who has been the true leader in the Congress on Irish issues throughout his career, as he has been in so many other

areas, and Carolyn McCarthy, also of New York, has, while only in Congress for a brief time, become conversant with these issues, knowledgeable, forceful, and has become a real player.

We have all spent dozens of hours meeting with the political leaders in Northern Ireland. We have visited there. I have been there personally five times in the last 3 or 4 years, to try to just let them know that the world is watching, that it is important what they are doing, that the people of America care deeply, and we can see over the horizon the bright future that they will experience if they can just hold this together.

President Clinton has invested himself deeply in this. He knows the issues, he knows the players, and herein I think lies his greatest legacy.

Mr. President, you must do something to help at this critical situation. I would not make a suggestion, other than that you need to think about it, you need to think about how far we have come, how much we have invested, and what can happen if this falls apart.

Tonight I spoke with Rita O'Hare, the spokesman for Sinn Fein in Washington. She was actually in Dublin. There was grave concern in her voice, perhaps even fear, fear that we could lose what hard work and a little good luck and many prayers have gained.

There is a great deal at stake, but it is still repairable, but I fear that it is not repairable for long. The way forward is still the Good Friday Agreement that everyone signed on to.

The IRA has made a real commitment to disarmament. It must be coupled and symmetrical with a reduction in forces and arms on the part of the British, the Northern Ireland Police, the Protestant paramilitaries. Everyone, all sides, must get rid of their guns. Only then will we have real peace in Northern Ireland.

But to hang the whole process on the issue of disarmament or decommissioning is bogus. There are far more issues at stake here, not the least of which is removing the causes, the root causes, of violence: Prejudice, injustice, bigotry, triumphalism. All of these things in time must be eliminated.

Perhaps George Mitchell would be willing to once more try. He must cringe when he hears that, but he is the only one that has been able to put this back together at each and every juncture and each and every crisis.

I do not know what the answer is. Hopefully my colleagues here in the House will be able to shed some light on it.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from Mineola, Long Island, New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY).

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. I thank my dear colleague from New York (Mr. WALSH), and I thank the gentleman from Long Island, New York (Mr. KING) also.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to be very brief on this. I will not even try to say that I am as knowledgeable as the two gentlemen here. But I have been to Ireland. I was there a year ago August when we were trying to put together the peace process.

The one thing I know, when I came back from Ireland, I know what the people of Northern Ireland wanted, and that was peace. Anywhere we went you could tell all they wanted was peace.

All of us watched over the weekend, hearing of news of what was going on. Many of us, our hearts sunk, because one moment it did not look like it was going to be put together, and the next moment things were going well. This afternoon we got word that things were not going well, that the IRA had walked away.

I want to clarify that point, because I am afraid tomorrow the newspapers and the media are going to blame the IRA for everything that has gone on. I do not believe that is really what has happened.

The IRA walked away from the bargaining table, but not from the peace process. The IRA and Sinn Fein are not walking away from peace, and I think all of us have to remember that. They want to continue the peace process.

The IRA and Sinn Fein are committed to the Good Friday Agreement. The IRA and Sinn Fein went to the Unionist Party and the British government to keep their commitments in the Good Friday Agreement as well. By suspending the newly formed Belfast administration, Northern Secretary of State Peter Mandelson is pulling out the rug from under the peace process. I know both sides will probably argue that, but those of us that have been following it felt that he should have stood his ground and continued to work things out.

The Belfast administration did not have a chance to succeed because it was held hostage by one man and his threat to resign. That is wrong. That is wrong for the people of Ireland, that is wrong for the people of Northern Ireland.

The road to peace is paved by compromise, not by the demands of one country or one man. Sinn Fein and the IRA are willing to adhere to their agreement, but the British Government is changing the rules. I agree with my colleague that this is a time when Tony Blair really has to take a stance and prove to everyone that he wants to see peace in Ireland.

Let us remember that the IRA and Sinn Fein have kept the peace process going.

□ 2130

Sinn Fein and the IRA, they have kept their guns silent.

I can speak from personal experience, knowing what it is like to lose a loved one, my husband, to gun violence. As a mother I can speak as someone who has seen a child maimed, so I know what the women of Ireland are feeling

tonight. We must persevere. We must have President Clinton continue to work, and I agree this could be his legacy, his greatest legacy. The American people must stand together and have their voices heard. Again, here in Congress, we must continue to work to make sure that this works for all of us. We of Irish American descent over the last several years have discovered what it is to be Irish. It is a proud race. We are proud that we all belong to it. We will continue to do our job to make sure that there will be peace in Northern Ireland. God willing, it will happen sooner than later.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I yield time to my good friend and distinguished colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I am proud to rise this evening to discuss the Irish peace process and the crisis that threatens it this evening and, unfortunately, probably into the next several weeks.

At the outset, I want to commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) for his leadership, both in calling this Special Order this evening and also the leadership he has shown as chairman of the Friends of Ireland Committee and for the work he has done, for instance, in leading the congressional delegation which accompanied President Clinton to Ireland and Northern Ireland in 1995 and again in 1998.

I also have to commend my colleague in the neighboring district of Long Island (Mrs. MCCARTHY) for the enthusiasm and the interest she has shown in this issue. She also was with the President and Congressman WALSH and myself in Ireland, in Northern Ireland on the President's trip in 1998. She attends meeting after meeting; she meets with all of the parties from all sides. She meets with victims; she meets with the police; she meets with representatives of the British Government, the Irish government, and all of the significant political parties in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Of course, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY), who is the Co-chairman for the Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs who represents the district that I was born and grew up in. Unfortunately, I did not have enough money to be able to live in his district. I had to move out to Long Island. Joe represents that district today, and he does a great job, both in representing his constituents and also in applying himself so much to this issue of peace in Ireland, an issue which he addressed when he was a member of the New York State Assembly and which he has continued to address in an even more dramatic way during the 2 years he has been a Member of the United States Congress.

So all of us are here this evening, Mr. Speaker, to address the underlying crisis which threatens the very survival of the Irish peace process. First of all, I want to say that I associate myself

with all of the remarks of Congressman WALSH and Congresswoman MCCARTHY, and I am sure whatever remarks that Congressman CROWLEY makes I would also attach myself to those. I do know that the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) is going to attempt to make it here this evening, but if not, he wanted to put it on the record that he stands with us in the call that we are making this evening.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential, I believe, that the facts be laid out as to exactly what has precipitated this current crisis. The gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) has gone over many of them in his presentation, and I would like to reiterate a number of them now. Because unfortunately, I believe that both here in the United States, particularly in the American media and also in the British media and, to some extent, even the Irish media, the facts have been misrepresented and a totally false image has been created.

Number one, the fact is that the breakdown in the Irish peace process is solely the responsibility of David Trimble and the LC Unionist party. Sinn Fein and Jerry Adams have complied with each and every provision of the Good Friday Agreement and each and every understanding that was arrived at with Senator Mitchell last fall.

This crisis came about because David Trimble said that the IRA would have to begin decommissioning by February 1. The Good Friday Agreement called for decommissioning by May 22 of this year. Even that date of May 22 was premised on governmental institutions in northern Irish and north-south institutions between the north of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland being in place sometime in August or September of 1998. In other words, there was supposed to be a 20-month lead up to the conclusion of decommissioning.

The purpose of that was to let the people on the ground, to let the people in the Catholic and the Nationalist and the Republican community see that the political process was working. As that process was working, weapons would be decommissioned and it would have been completed by May of this year.

It was David Trimble who refused to allow the government to be created in the north of Ireland. It was David Trimble who delayed and delayed and delayed through every obstacle in the way and caused a 16-month delay.

So it was not until November; actually, December 2nd of last year that the government was finally put in place in Northern Ireland and that an executive was set up which included two members of Sinn Fein, Martin McGuinness and Barbara deBrun, who would sit as members of that executive.

That creation of the government was preceded by months of negotiations with Senator Mitchell. The result of those negotiations was that David Trimble agreed to allow the government to be created and, in return for

that, the IRA, the Irish Republican Army, agreed to send one of their members to take part in the meetings of the International Commission on Decommissioning. That was the sum and substance of the agreement that was worked out with Senator Mitchell.

When David Trimble then went public, he announced that yes, he was allowing the creation of the government, but then he imposed an arbitrary deadline of February 1 which had not been agreed to by anyone.

I think it is important to put on the record, because, unfortunately, not everything is being made public these days. But the reality is that on December 6 of last year, Peter Mandelson, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland came to Washington and, at a lunch with a number of Members of Congress, stated that the first he heard of the February 1 so-called agreement was when David Trimble announced it; that it was never agreed to. He, quite frankly, did not know what was going to happen when February 1 came along.

The first thing he did was ask Gerry Adams for help and advice, and he said he would work with the British government and try to find a way to resolve this. But never, ever was it a condition. Yet, as February 1 approached, suddenly all of the pressure was but on Sinn Fein, it was put on the Irish Republican Army, it was specifically put on Gerry Adams. I find it really disgraceful that so many American newspapers, and I am talking about The New York Times, The Washington Post, the New York Daily News, the New York Post, the Boston Globe, News Day in my own county, all of them wrote totally one-sided editorials saying that there had been an agreement breached by Sinn Fein and the IRA because it was not going to be decommissioning by February 1 when, in fact, no such agreement ever existed.

The entire premise of all of these editorials was a lie. There was never any agreement at all to have any decommissioning by February 1 of this year, but based on this lie, based on this misrepresentation, everything was set in motion. As a result of that, this crisis developed. Even though there was no obligation on the IRA, there was no obligation on Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams was meeting around the clock with the British Government, with the Irish government, attempting to meet with David Trimble, on the phone with people here in the United States, talking to the White House, talking to the National Security Council.

And he was doing that to try to find an agreement which he was under no legal or moral obligation to find, but he did it anyway because of his commitment to the peace process. He did it, and he did come forward with a number of concessions by the IRA, the most recent being last Friday concessions they had no obligation to make. Yet, in spite of that, the British Government, under the direction of Secretary of State Mandelson, last Friday

suspended the agreement, suspended the Good Friday Agreement and they took all the powers back to London, away from Belfast.

I think what is lost in all of this is, and Congressman WALSH mentioned this in his speech, this was illegal. There was no legal justification for one government, the British government to eviscerate an internationally arrived at agreement. This was a formal agreement which was arrived at by Great Britain, by the government of Ireland, and by all of the signators to the agreement, including Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein, and it was an agreement that was ratified by 90 percent of the people in the Republic of Ireland and over 70 percent of the people in the north of Ireland. Yet, even though not one provision of that agreement was violated, the British have now reimposed direct rule in Northern Ireland, and there is no legal basis for that.

Now, the argument can be made, and I can understand it to some extent, that the British found that if they did not do this, the peace process would collapse. Well, what they have done is they have in effect; not in effect, but in reality, they have violated the law for what they feel is the greater good of preserving the peace process. Well, if that is their motive, then there is even more of an incentive on them to make sure this peace process works.

They have to let David Trimble know that he cannot be the final arbiter of what is acceptable. Already he is saying he wants the British government to renegotiate what is going to happen with the Northern Ireland police force, the royal constabulary. He wants to renegotiate any number of items that are in the Good Friday Agreement. He has no right to renegotiate anything. This was an agreement that was formally ratified and approved by referendum and signed by the two governments, and he has absolutely no right to be doing this; yet, he is giving the clear impression that he is a veto power over the process.

If that is the case, how can anyone expect the Republican community, the IRA, Sinn Fein, or his rank and file Catholics living in places like Derry and West Belfast, how can we expect them to have faith in the system if David Trimble can undo it whenever he wants to; if he can rewrite an agreement whenever it suits him. What is the incentive to go into the agreement. What is the incentive to enter into a peace process if David Trimble can just pull the rug out whenever he wants to. That is why it is so essential that the British government make it clear that David Trimble is not going to be allowed to continue to ride roughshod over a lawful process and he is not going to be able to literally rip up agreements when he chooses to do so.

Also, if there is going to be an ultimate agreement reached in this whole decommissioning issue, it is essential that it be resolved once and for all, and that it involve all the guns in Northern

Ireland. Again, Congressman WALSH has mentioned this. There is the guns of the British army; there is the military installations of the British army, many of which were increased after the IRA cease-fire went into effect. There is also, and many people do not realize this, 150,000 Unionist guns in Northern Ireland, so-called legal guns. These are guns which the British government and the Northern Ireland authorities have allowed the unions to have, 150,000 legal guns.

They also have what are called 35,000 personal security guns which are given to people in public life or people who feel that they are being threatened. None of those guns are given to members, for instance, of Sinn Fein. Almost all of those guns go to Unionists and Loyalists and yet, I believe the facts will bear me out on this, that no political party in the western world has had more fatalities and more casualties because of political violence than Sinn Fein.

Sinn Fein's officials have been attacked, they have been shot, murdered, wounded, and maimed; and yet nothing is done at all to protect them, and all we hear about are the guns of the IRA. Also, there are the guns of the loyalist paramilitaries, the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Ulster Defense Association, and any number of others, we can go on and list them all.

So all of this has to be addressed. The entire issue of guns in northern Ireland has to be addressed. Yes, the IRA did walk away from the negotiations today. However, as Congressman McCarthy said, they did not walk away from the peace process, and that is important to remember.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot say what I would do if I were in their place, but I can certainly understand the logic in what they did. Because back in November they made a solid agreement with Senator Mitchell that they would send a representative to the decommissioning commission to meet, discuss decommissioning in return for David Trimble allowing the government to be set up in Northern Ireland. Now that that government has been suspended, the IRA feels why should it keep its end of the agreement if David Trimble is not keeping his. But significantly, it has been made clear to all of us who have looked into this that the IRA has no intention of breaking the cease-fire; the cease-fire is intact and it is going to remain intact. So they are still part of the peace process even though they are not at the table of the decommissioning body.

How much longer can this be risked? How much longer is Tony Blair going to allow these games to be played where one person can undermine and unravel the peace process that has taken years to be put together? The key player in that quite frankly has been President Clinton. He has done a tremendous job in keeping the parties together. Certainly over the last several weeks, I know the President was

personally involved in this. He and members of the National Security Council were in contact with all of the parties and were responsible for keeping the process going as long as they did. I am, however, critical of the statement the White House put out where it seemed to put the onus on the IRA for not coming in sooner with their proposal. The fact is, as we said before, they have under no obligation to submit any proposal at all, and it appears as if the proposal they did submit was known to Peter Mandelson in advance, and yet he still took no action to stop the suspension of the government, which leads to the belief he was going to suspend the government anyway just as a way to protect David Trimble.

So in the days and weeks ahead as we head towards St. Patrick's Day, which will be approximately five weeks I guess from today, or probably four weeks from this week, it is so important that all of us, and all Americans, not just Irish Americans but all Americans who care about peace and justice in Ireland, will stand together, stand as one. Yes, we are more than willing to work with David Trimble, work with the British government, work with any of the parties who are honestly committed to the peace process.

□ 2145

But we cannot allow ourselves to be used as accessories to a game where David Trimble rewrites the rules, rewrites agreements, and reneges on agreements that he has entered into.

If that is what is done, there is not going to be peace in Ireland, and it is a situation that none of us even want to contemplate what could happen if this unravels, because this is the best chance for peace for all the people in Ireland probably in the entire history of Ireland, and certainly in the last 30 years or 75 years. There has never been an opportunity such as the one that is there today.

It is there. It is the good Friday agreement. It is the basis which allows all of the parties to move forward while all of the parties at the same time make concessions. It is the agreement which provides the basis where everyone's legitimate rights are protected, and everyone should receive peace and security, so long as the agreement is fully implemented. That is what has to be done. That is the role the U.S. can play.

Senator Mitchell has done a great job in the past. The gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) is trying to bring about a divorce in the Mitchell family by asking George Mitchell to go back again. He has made the ultimate sacrifice twice in putting in so much time and effort. If he is willing to do it again, God bless him. But we as Americans, as Members of this Congress, as people who care about the peace process in Ireland, we have to do what we have to do.

We have to work with the President, we have to work with all the parties to

bring about that peace which is so close and yet so far, but in doing this, we cannot allow ourselves to be scared off or turned away by the American media, which unfortunately in the last several weeks, and I think it has really been disgraceful the way they have so misrepresented and misreported what the reality is in Northern Ireland, and unfortunately has provided a climate and backdrop which has allowed both the British government and David Trimble to do what they have done.

I know that when we look at the British media, when we look at the television and radio shows in Northern Ireland, especially, all of these editorials are cited as proof that the American people are standing behind David Trimble, when exactly the opposite is true. Those of us who know what is going on realize that the onus for all of this is on David Trimble, and we are not going to allow him to get away with it. We are going to stay committed to this process until peace does come to Ireland.

I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) again for his efforts, both tonight and throughout the history of this process.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) for that summation. It is right on the money, as always, and I certainly associate myself with the gentleman's remarks.

I yield to another good friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY), another newcomer to the House but someone who has been in the leadership as a private citizen and also as a member of the State legislature fighting for peace and justice in the United States and in Northern Ireland.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend, the gentleman from upstate New York (Mr. WALSH) for organizing this special order this evening. He has been a stalwart ally and friend of the peace process in Northern Ireland, and I congratulate him for calling this special order.

I also want to congratulate and thank my good friend and colleague the gentlewoman from Long Island, New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY). She may be relatively new to Congress, although I am newer than she is at this point in time, but she, too, has proven herself to be a true and good friend to the people of Ireland.

I want to thank the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL). Although the gentleman from Massachusetts is not here, I understand the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) has mentioned he is going to try to be here before the end of the special order, and the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), chairman of the Committee on International Relations, another co-chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs.

Lastly, I just want to thank my good friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING), for all his work throughout

his years of service here in the House of Representatives, and prior to that his service in local government back in Long Island. The question I am most often asked by some of the gentleman's friends back in Woodside and Sunnyside, they want to know what type of curtains he has out there in Seaford.

Mr. Speaker, the political process in Northern Ireland has had a major setback recently, when the British government suspended the Northern Ireland Power-Sharing Executive. Such a drastic measure certainly does not instill parties on the Republican and National side in Northern Ireland with a great deal of confidence.

I realize there has been much criticism in the press lately, as the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING), has mentioned, wrongfully so, about the IRA and decommissioning. But I, too, want to set the record straight.

Back in May of 1998, the parties in Northern Ireland got together to support the historic Good Friday agreement, which set up a political structure inclusive of all the people of Northern Ireland. This agreement was accepted by not only the people of Northern Ireland, but the people of Ireland and Britain as well.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a point. I would like to point out that nowhere in the Good Friday agreement does it say that if the IRA or any other group has not decommissioned by the end of January 2000, the Ulster Unionist Party, the UUP, can threaten to pull out of the agreement and that the British can suspend the power-sharing executive.

We have this agreement, and the people of Northern Ireland waited for the Power-Sharing Executive to convene. Unfortunately, the UUP leader, Mr. David Trimble, refused to let it go forward.

Here we see the process of what I like to call the de facto veto. While Mr. Trimble and the UUP do not have a veto spelled out in the Good Friday agreement, they have one because every time progress begins to occur on setting up the democratic institutions needed for peace, Mr. Trimble finds some new crisis to stop it.

So in 1999, Northern Ireland found itself in a new crisis when Mr. Trimble would not allow the executive to meet, and former Senator George Mitchell was called in to review the process, particularly the aspects of decommissioning.

Bear in mind here that the Good Friday agreement does not even say that the IRA must begin decommissioning for the Power-Sharing Executive to begin. In fact, it only says that parties to the agreement, which includes Sinn Fein, not the IRA, Sinn Fein and not the IRA, will work to get paramilitary and other groups to begin the process of decommissioning.

Mr. Speaker, Senator Mitchell went to Northern Ireland and worked very hard, very hard with the pro-agreement parties, like the SDLP, the UUP, and

Sinn Fein. He worked out a new accommodation. The IRA sent an interlocutor to the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, the IICD, set up under the Good Friday agreement, and the UUP let the Power-Sharing Executive form and hold meetings.

So 18 months, a full 1½ years after the Good Friday agreement was signed, we finally see real movement and the establishment of democratic institutions in the north of Ireland. I might point out, the IRA has agreed to in about 5 months what it previously intended to do in 2 years. That is no small commitment on the part of the IRA when they have been misled in the past.

What happens a mere 11 weeks after the Power-Sharing Executive begins? Mr. Trimble decides needs to exercise his de facto veto power again, and says that he will resign unless more progress is made on decommissioning. This is even before the IICD issued its report.

Suddenly, Peter Mandelson, the Secretary for Northern Ireland, fearing the collapse of the process, rushes legislation through the House of Commons effectively reimposing direct British rule and suspending the democratic institution set up under the Good Friday agreement.

This bears repeating, Mr. Speaker. The Power-Sharing Executive was set up and running for only 11 weeks, 11 weeks, Mr. Speaker. In that time the UUP wanted the IRA to turn over its weapons in simply 11 weeks, even though the IRA ceasefire has held the entire time, and they invested a tremendous amount of time and energy into this peace process.

Mr. Trimble, casting all of this aside, exercised his de facto veto yet again, and the process comes crumbling down.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear, I support decommissioning wholeheartedly. I would like to see all parties in Northern Ireland turn in their weapons, renounce violence, and solve their differences through the political process and the democratic institutions designed under the Good Friday agreement. If we ask the IRA, they would tell us they want the exact same thing, only the IRA wants to see some progress made on the democratic institutions first.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Members, suspending the democratic institutions after just 11 weeks does not instill confidence. Here is where, despite all of this, the IRA shows how truly committed to the peace process they are. They put forward a new proposal on decommissioning. They are willing to go even further than the Mitchell review. The new proposal is accepted by the IICD and touted as a major step, a major step forward on decommissioning. It is also accepted by the Irish government, but not by Mr. Trimble. He once again exercises his de facto veto and says the IRA has not gone far enough.

Well, that is when the IRA had finally had enough. They withdrew today their interlocutor from the IICD, and said that until the suspension of the Power-Sharing Executive is lifted they would suspend their activities on decommissioning.

Mr. Speaker, I feel the need to be very clear here once again. The IRA is still holding to the ceasefire and still wants to see the implementation of the Good Friday agreement. They just want the democratic institutions created under the agreement to remain in effect, not an unreasonable request. I do not think it is unreasonable.

Let me just say that I am deeply disappointed by Mr. Trimble's decision to reject the new proposition on IRA decommissioning. I agree with the IICD that it would have been a major step forward. Clearly, the IRA has been an active participant in the peace process, and important progress has been made. Unfortunately, David Trimble and Peter Mandelson have dismissed these significant developments.

For far too long the people of Northern Ireland have been waiting for the democratic institutions created under the Good Friday agreement to become an effective force for peace and stability. Mr. Speaker, the time for inside politics is over.

The Ulster Unionist Party and the British government must let the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning complete its work. We have come too far and too many lives are at stake. We must not allow one man, one man to destroy a process agreed to by the people of Northern Ireland, Southern Ireland, and Great Britain.

I have a personal stake in this peace process. My mother was born in County Armagh in Northern Ireland, and I have many family, friends, and loved ones who will either enjoy or suffer in their lives, depending on what happens during this process. Only a return to the political framework agreed to under the historic Good Friday agreement will resolve the current crisis and move it forward to continue on to the creation of a new Ireland.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) for his participation in this special order tonight, and for contributing his thoughts and ideas.

His summation of the situation is very, very clear and accurate. There is the need to stick to the agreement, the initial agreement that got us this far.

I would like to also thank my colleagues, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) for participating.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude with a brief story about a personal experience that I had. My family and I adopted a Project Children child from Northern Ireland back in 1990, a young man I believe about 12 years old at the time. He had never been outside of Northern Ireland.

He came to Syracuse, New York, by a plane, flew over, the first time he had ever been in a plane, and lived with us for 6 weeks. He had some trouble adapting to American food and music. He was a terrific soccer player, though, and we stuck him on our summer team as a ringer and he played great soccer. He loved to fish, he loved to be around the water. He just loved the peace and solitude of upstate New York.

He went back. I did not see him for 5 years. I went over when President Clinton went to Northern Ireland. On that historic day when they went to City Hall to dress the Christmas tree, I went to Michael Lyons' home and met with his mom and his sisters, and had a wonderful visit.

His mother told me that for the first time in his young life, and he was then 17 years old, for the first time in 17 years of his life, other than the 6 weeks he spent in upstate New York, he had never known peace before. This was the first time he could walk to school or go to the store or visit a friend and not have to worry about a bomb going off, a car driving by and riddling his friends and fellow citizens with automatic weapons, fire breaking out throughout the neighborhood, murals on the walls with masked men and rifles.

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That was his whole life for 17 years. She said he can now walk down the street without being tugged and pulled at by those who want to draw him into this fight. He does not have to make that choice anymore; you are either with us or you are against us. He does not have to make the choice of going to war or going to school.

For the first time in 17 years, it is a remarkable event for any country. There are very few places in the world where war has gone on for 30 years, but nonetheless that was his life.

Today, 5 years later, there is still peace but it is tenuous.

I remember when I first engaged myself in this peace process I said to Jerry Adams, I said to David Trimble, when they were first coming, what do you expect to get from this peace process?

He said, peace; a straightforward answer.

I said to Jerry Adams, when I met him at a different time, I said, what do you expect to get from this peace process?

He said, peace, with justice.

Therein lies the problem. Two people who inhabit the same city, believe in the same God, speak the same language, have the same hobbies and habits and interests, one group has justice, one group has no justice. In order for there to be peace, there has to be justice. In order for there to be justice, everyone has to agree on the way forward. The only agreement thus far that everyone has agreed to is the Good Friday Agreement, and just like us, in our country, when crisis comes, impeachment, war, we do not set the Constitution on the side while we work it out.

We honor it, we respect it, we live by it, we write our laws by it and we govern by it.

The only way for this process to go forward is to have everyone come back and sit down and say, yes, this is the only way we can go, this is the only thing we all agree to, and, therefore, in order to get to that bright future over the horizon, let us again swear to support this agreement.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. WALSH, the distinguished Chairman of the Friends of Ireland for tonight's Special Order.

The Irish peace process is in crisis and we need to make sure that both governments and peace loving people around the globe know what happened and why we are here.

It is disappointing and a step backwards in the search for lasting peace and justice in the north of Ireland that the British Government has suspended the vital power sharing institutions that had been the best chance to produce overall change in the north. Even after positive steps were being made to resolve the arms issue, the unionist veto by the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) was again exercised to force suspension under the threat of resignation by the UUP's First Minister, David Trimble.

Terms of the Good Friday Accord set out the time frames and means to bring about lasting change, including removal of the guns from Irish politics. Those who have unilaterally changed its terms and exercised a veto over its operation and terms once again must explain their intransigence to the Irish people, both north and south, who support the Good Friday Accord in overwhelming terms.

We need to get the institutions back up and running in order to create the climate and framework for arms decommissioning as envisioned by the terms of the Good Friday Accord.

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LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. LOWEY (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today and February 16 on account of illness.

Mrs. CAPPS (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of a death in the family.

Mr. BAIRD (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of an unavoidable family matter.

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SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BALDACCIO) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. CLAYTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. LARSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BALDACCIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CROWLEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. SLAUGHTER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PASCRELL, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. HANSEN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)