

becoming the Deputy Chief of Information and Director of the Navy Reserve Public Affairs program, responsible for the training and readiness of more than 500 public affairs reservists.

In June 2004, Rear Adm. Slavonic was ordered to active duty in support of Operation Noble Eagle and Operation Enduring Freedom II, Baghdad, Iraq. He was assigned to the Multinational Force—Iraq (MFN-I) staff. He served as the senior public affairs officer for Army Gen. George W. Casey, Commanding General for MNF-I, and the Director, Combined Press Information Center (CPIC).

From June to November, Rear Adm. Slavonic led a 65-person team responsible for ensuring more than 500 national and international media organizations received timely and accurate information concerning daily combat operations throughout the Iraqi theater.

Rear Adm. Slavonic began his Navy career in 1971, as a Seaman who enlisted after graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in advertising from Oklahoma State University. After completing boot camp at Navy Training Center, Great Lakes, Ill., and attending Signalman "A" school in Newport, R.I., he received orders to the aircraft carrier USS *Constellation* (CVA 64) and completed two western Pacific deployments.

Upon separation from active duty, Rear Adm. Slavonic affiliated with the Navy Reserve Command in Oklahoma City. He received a direct commission as a restricted line officer in public affairs and, in 1976, earned a master of education degree from the University of Central Oklahoma.

In November 1990, Rear Adm. Slavonic was recalled to active duty for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was assigned to the staff of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf at U.S. Central Command and served at the Joint Information Bureau in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. During his tour in the Arabian Gulf theater, Rear Adm. Slavonic served as a Chief of Navy News desk and combat media escort officer, which included escorting media pools on board USS *Curtis* (FFG 38) to document processing and interrogation of more than 40 Iraqi prisoners of war.

He was serving as media escort officer with a media pool on the 18,000-ton amphibious assault ship USS *Tripoli* (LPH 10) in the Arabian Gulf when it struck an Iraqi underwater tethered mine.

Rear Adm. Slavonic has served four commanding officer tours, twice with Navy Office of Information Southwest Detachment 111 Dallas-Fort Worth and twice with the Office of Information Detachment 411 Oklahoma City. He also served as executive officer of 01 Det 411 and staff public affairs officer for REDCOM Eleven.

Rear Adm. Slavonic's Oklahoma City unit earned the Rear Adm. Robert Ravitz Award for Public Affairs Excellence and was a finalist for the Readiness Command Ten Admiral Robert Natter (small) Unit Award. In 1984, Rear Adm. Slavonic was the first recipient of the Navy Reserve Association's "Junior Navy Reserve Officer of the Year" Award.

A native of Great Bend, Kansas, Rear Adm. Slavonic was raised and resides in Oklahoma City where he is an account executive with NBC affiliate KFOR-TV. He is a life member of the Navy Reserve Association as well as Oklahoma State University and the University of Central Oklahoma alumni organizations.

Rear Adm. Slavonic has also served as president of the Navy Reserve Association (central chapter); president of the U.S. Navy League (local chapter); minority owner of the Oklahoma City Cavalry (Continental Basketball Association team); and as an adjunct professor at the University of Central Oklahoma. He is also active in the Oklahoma City Advertising Club and Leadership Oklahoma City.

Awards earned by Rear Adm. Slavonic include the Bronze Star Medal; Meritorious Service Medal (two awards); Navy Commendation Medal (two awards); Navy Achievement Medal (three awards); Presidential Unit Citation; Combat Action Ribbon; Vietnam Cross of Gallantry; Vietnam Service Medal (one star); Republic of Vietnam Service Medal; Southeast Asia Service Medal (two stars); Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia); Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; and the Joint Service Unit Citation, as well as other service and campaign awards.

Mr. Speaker, I know Rear Adm. Slavonic personally. We first met when he was assisting veterans of the USS *Oklahoma*, obtaining the financial and civic support necessary to create a permanent memorial to their lost ship and fallen comrades. This told me a great deal about his appreciation of Americans of every generation who have worn the uniform for their country and placed their lives at risk for their countrymen. My second opportunity to see Rear Adm. Slavonic was in Baghdad, where he was serving professionally, capably, and courageously in the combat zone. This more than anything else demonstrates that Rear Adm. Slavonic lives according to the values he professes. Like every other American, I am grateful for his service.

I asked the Rear Admiral to call upon me when he returned from Iraq because I was interested in his candid appraisal of our country's efforts there. Upon his arrival in Washington, he visited my office, and our exchange was so productive that I asked him to join me for a breakfast meeting to continue our conversation. He graciously complied, and as a result I had the benefit of his profound expertise, professional judgment, and keen insights into the challenges our country and our military face in Iraq.

On every occasion on which I have encountered and interacted with Rear Adm. Slavonic, he has impressed me with his professional courtesy, his commitment to our country, and his wise counsel. He is an able and honorable sailor who embodies the finest traditions of the United States Navy.

His family and fellow shipmates can be proud of his service. Rear Adm. Slavonic, his wife Molly, and children Kara, Maggie, and Blake, and Blake's wife Kasey and grandson Hogan have made many sacrifices during his Naval and civilian careers, and we appreciate their contributions of conscientious service to our country. As he departs the Pentagon to start his third career, I call upon my colleagues to wish Greg and his family every success, and the traditional Navy "fair winds and following seas." It is a pleasure to recognize this gentleman at the conclusion of a distinguished career of service to the United States of America.

STATEMENT DURING HEARING ON
"FOSTERING DEMOCRACY IN THE
MIDDLE EAST"

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, May 17, 2005, I, as the Ranking Minority Member for the House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations made the following statement during a hearing on "Fostering Democracy in the Middle East: Defeating Terrorism With Ballots":

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to the distinguished witnesses that are here today for this important hearing. We have much to learn from the experts who are here with us, and we must listen and use this knowledge to correct the disastrous foreign policy road that this Administration has embarked upon—a policy which has already taken the lives of over 1,600 U.S. soldiers and wounded thousands more. Congress can help save many more lives by changing these failed policies immediately. As the journalist Thomas Friedman wrote recently, "you can't build a decent society on the graves of suicide bombers and their victims."

Our policy is greatly misguided and also misrepresented. During the President's 2005 State of the Union address there were Iraqis in the audience who held up ink-stained thumbs in a symbol intending to convey that democracy had reached finally reached Iraq—thanks to the U.S. Their hope was to send the message that even though WMDs were never found, the victory of bringing democracy to Iraq was worth the cost in blood and treasure.

But before we congratulate ourselves, I must admit that I am skeptical of the Administration's policy of promoting democracy. The United States does not have a history of bringing democracy to nations out of pure altruism. Rather there is usually something we have to gain by overthrowing a nation and the promotion of democracy is the excuse we use to do it. Or in the case of Iraq, it was our fall-back excuse. The war to eradicate WMDs quickly transformed into the war to bring democracy to Iraqis—once the world discovered that WMDs did not in fact exist in Iraq.

Perhaps the greatest argument against this vision of pure altruism is that when it is in our interest to leave undemocratic governments alone, we do.

Examples of this argument are the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These countries have well-known horrendous human rights records and have serious impediments to democracy. According to the State Departments 2004 Report on Human Rights Practices,

"Uzbekistan is an authoritarian state with limited civil rights. . . . the December 26 elections fell significantly short of international standards for democratic elections . . . the executive branch heavily influenced the courts and did not ensure due process . . . Government's human rights record remained very poor . . . police and National Security Service forces tortured, beat, and harassed persons . . . the Government restricted freedom of religion and movement . . . the Government severely restricted fundamental worker rights."

These conditions are more or less present throughout the other Central Asian states. Yet the U.S. has not taken firm steps to encourage reforms. There have been provisions

to condition aid based on progress in democratization and respect for human rights, however when the State Department decided to cut aid to Uzbekistan (or failure to meet these conditions (equal to \$18 million), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced that Uzbekistan would receive an increase of \$21 million in military aid. Furthermore, the aid condition in Kazakhstan is allowed a presidential waiver.

This "soft-line" approach is probably in large part to the strategic location of these states. The Central Asian states offered overflight and other support when the U.S. went into Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have hosted coalition troops and provided access to airbases. In 2003, Uzbekistan endorsed coalition military action in Iraq and Kazakhstan provided about two-dozen troops for rebuilding.

Our policy is convenient, not consistent. We talk about building democracy in the Middle East out of one side of our mouth, while we keep authoritarian regimes in power on the other side.

The world is watching closely what the U.S. does in Iraq, and we are hopeful that a legitimate democracy will flourish there and throughout the region. I am hopeful other Arab nations will eventually hold elections. But it must be on their timetable, not ours.

Our presence in Iraq is only slowing any hope for genuine democratization. Violence against Iraqis is only increasing as time goes by. The country is becoming even more destabilized. But this Administration has not yet presented an exit strategy or any kind of timetable of bringing our troops home. Instead, we are pouring billions of dollars into the probable construction of long-term military facilities in Iraq so that we can have a permanent presence there, as well as in the surrounding countries, none of which could be called democratic.

So, Mr. Chairman, I hope that this hearing will go beyond self-congratulation and beyond merely illuminating the desire for democracy by people in the Middle East. Rather I hope that this hearing will illuminate how our missteps are hindering democracy, so that we can correct a failed policy.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL MICHAEL VAN RASSEN

HON. ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lieutenant Colonel Michael Van Rassen upon his retirement from the U.S. Army after more than 20 years of outstanding service to our country. After his retirement on August 31, 2005, Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen will reside in my Congressional district.

Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen has been assigned to several key military positions throughout his career, which culminated as the Product Manager for Fielding and Integration for Air and Missile Defense Command and Control Systems (AMDCCS) Product Office in Madison, Alabama, a position he has held since 2002. It is in this role that Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen will leave an enduring mark on the future of the Army.

He was instrumental in the deployment of the Forward Area Air Defense Command, cross leveraging software capabilities through the Air and Missile Defense Planning and Control System program, designing and vali-

dating the critical need for the Air Defense Aerospace Management Cell, leading the DOD Counter-Rocket, Artillery and Mortar initiative for deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen has distinguished himself throughout his military service in challenging and diverse assignments. Throughout his career, he has received many medals and awards for his ability to lead by example, encourage excellence from his peers and subordinates, effectively manage the Army's resources, and consistently produce outstanding results. I commend Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen for his ability to energize a diverse staff toward a common purpose, setting high standards and inspiring his staff to achieve them.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of North Alabama, I congratulate Lieutenant Colonel Van Rassen for his 20 years of service to our country.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTION CONDEMNING RELIGIOUS INTOL- ERANCE AND URGING RESPECT FOR ALL HOLY BOOKS

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, so much of American history is defined by our national commitment to tolerate each others' religious differences. This was the wisdom behind the words of President John Kennedy, who reminded us that "tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one's own beliefs. Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others."

I introduce this Resolution today as a reminder that we must still strive to condemn bigotry and religious intolerance, and recognize that holy books of every religion should be treated with dignity and respect. Our dedication to this struggle has never been more important than it is today, with recent events both at home and abroad. We can begin to fulfill this obligation with a renewed effort to continued education and the dispelling of stereotypes.

For example, much of the public is not aware that the word Islam comes from the Arabic root word meaning "peace" and "submission." Terrorism cannot be justified under any valid interpretation of the Islamic faith. There are an estimated 7 million Muslims in America, from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. The holy book of Islam, the Quran, is recited by Muslims during prayer. From the Quran, Muslims learn valuable lessons about peace, humanity and spirituality.

This Resolution recognizes that believers of all religions, including the faiths of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, should be treated with respect and dignity. The mistreatment of prisoners and disrespect toward the holy book of any religion is unacceptable and against civilized humanity. I am concerned as anyone that our nation would disparage the Quran or the Muslim religion. This Resolution therefore makes it clear that it is not the official policy of the U.S. government to disparage the Quran, Islam or any other faith. I hope this Resolution will help us recognize that we need

to embrace the Muslim people and tolerance if we are truly interested in supporting democracy around the world.

SUPPORT FOR H.R. 2057

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for H.R. 2057, which disapproves of DC. Act 16-47 (the Terrorism Prevention in Hazardous Materials Transportation Temporary Act of 2005), which calls for the rerouting of hazardous materials around Washington, DC.

While re-routing hazardous materials from the Capitol area of Washington, DC sounds well-intentioned, it only shifts the risk of that transportation to other neighborhoods and other modes of transportation. The additional switching of these cars will add to the congestion in the yards, and back up traffic on CSXT main lines, potentially affecting their entire network, including Amtrak, VRE, and MARC. It also means that chemical containers could be sitting for hours, if not days, in rail yards waiting to be moved.

Longer transit times and distances, increased car handlings and dwell times are factors that tend to increase the inherent risk of transporting hazardous materials. This would also add significant cost to the shippers, and potentially disrupt the flow of commerce for those customers like water treatment plants, pharmaceutical companies, gas stations, etc.

The Federal Government has always had the ultimate authority over interstate commerce. The transportation of hazardous materials is governed by Federal regulations as proscribed under the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, which gives the authority to DOT. And it is important to note that the railroads are governed by the common carrier duty, which means we must carry what is legally tendered to them by law.

Finally, the Department of Justice, the National Industrial Transportation League, the American Trucking Associations, the United Transportation Union, Norfolk Southern and others have either weighed in with an amicus brief in Federal Court, a letter to the STB, or a letter to the House Government Reform and Senate Homeland Security Committees.

I call upon government at all levels to develop meaningful standards that improve safety and security for all modes. Rerouting freight from one backyard to another does not constitute meaningful standards to improve safety and security for any mode, and I encourage this Congress to promptly disapprove DC's ordinance.

THE FIRST NATIONAL ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 19, 2005

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the first National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. This commemorative day aims to raise the awareness