

STANDING STRONG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for the remaining time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity this evening to discuss the call to duty that our armed services have accepted, the importance of standing firm in the global war on terror, a war that was imposed upon us by those who seek to destroy not only our way of life but remove all vestiges of a culture of freedom, of tolerance and opportunity from this world.

It is an interesting thing that I have seen happen in the United States since the terrible days following September 11. At that time, our national populace was galvanized. The war was close at hand. People understood the pain. We all knew the emotions we feel as we saw the images over and over again on television, stories of friends and family who were touched directly by the loss of relatives or friends who had been wounded or hurt during that attack.

□ 2320

Now we have moved back into comfortable familiarity. We are forgetting the importance of this was a war that was imposed upon us, one, I might add, that was coming whether we liked it or not.

The burgeoning of radical Islamic extremist movements throughout southwest Asia, principally funded by Wahabist groups, groups like al Qaeda, other affiliated groups, were spreading quietly across the world, across the latitude 10-40 window and, yes, right even in the United States, even in cases where taxpayer dollars were going to institutions and organizations that were promoting activities that were destructive to our national way of life.

Indeed, as President Bush said our freedoms not only were used against us in the initial assault of September 11, but our freedoms are used against us with salacious speech, literally calls to Jihad taking place right inside the border of this country.

What do we hear from the other side in this body speaking of tolerance, of faith, of ethnic diversity, of belief? We hear nothing. We hear nothing to confront that reality.

Indeed, a poignant moment came for me in the War on Terror, a war that is equally as important to this future of this Nation as the struggle was in the Second World War.

This past Tuesday, I had a singular and great honor. I was invited to attend the funeral of Sergeant Michael McNulty who served in America's premier counterterrorist organization. He served all around the world, helping us to have the freedom to speak here tonight, that people could sleep in their beds safe, knowing that their men and women on the front lines were willing

to lay their lives down, to go into harm's way, to stand firm, to train, to send a message to the world that our freedoms will be defended.

As the honor guard fired its volley, as the bandsman played Taps, as Mrs. McNulty wept with the four children next to her, the parents of Michael sitting behind them, looking at that flag-draped casket, we looked at a casket of a man who died fighting to preserve these freedoms. He died in western Iraq, but in the background what I heard was the sound of jets leaving Reagan National Airport, traffic on the roads, the sounds of tourists in the distance. I came back over to the city, and people were going about their day-to-day business, completely unaware, oblivious to the struggle that was going on with the exception of the occasional salacious news report that the liberal media puts into the newspapers or on television, not talking about the successes, not talking about the commitment, not talking about what is at stake for the future of this country and why, as a Nation, we must rise up and have a sense of duty, a sense of resolve and a sense of commitment.

One thing that we have learned in our history is to appease those who stand against our way of life, guarantees that the conflict that we seek to avoid will be brought upon us. Yet, we are not talking about this now. We hear empty rhetoric about exit strategies. We want to point to questions about the nature and motivation of, well, do we really want to be in this conflict.

Mr. Speaker, I need to share with my colleagues, we did not choose to be in this conflict. This conflict was imposed upon us by groups that were intent on bringing it to our shores, and men like Sergeant McNulty were among those who are working hard to keep it from our shores, especially since September 11.

As I look at this, one thing that I would share is that the best measure of the effectiveness and the belief in this mission is not public opinion polls to people who are not receiving the full story about this fight for freedom, this commitment to duty on the part of our Armed Services, the call to duty that I believe is upon every citizen of this country, as it has been for every generation that has come before us. What we need to understand is the best measure of belief in this mission in an army of the people who volunteer to serve is their morale and their commitment to stay the course.

Contrary to much of the empty rhetoric and hot air that I hear from many of the talking heads who have never served this country, I might add and have no concept of the things they speak of as we talk about these alleged problems, answer me this, Mr. Speaker. Why are active components exceeding their retention levels over 100 percent? Why is the Army, the active Army, this month in June going to exceed 100 percent of its initial recruitment

quota? It is because the message is getting out.

I have talked to over 400 soldiers and Marines since I have been in Congress this session. I have walked the halls with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY), my colleague who is going to share his views in a moment, and talked to wounded Marines. We have spoken with wounded soldiers. Over and over, we hear one thing: a commitment to their command; a belief in the mission; and a question of why the media is not accurately reporting the successes of our soldiers, our Marines, our airmen and our sailors in the theater.

We are not talking about the restoration of infrastructure that frankly did not exist in the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. We are not talking in the national media about the bringing for the first time in the history of this country true women's suffrage and women's rights and interest in the opportunity and the hope for families in Afghanistan. For the first time in the history of that part of the world, women went to the polls and chose a duly elected leader of the country.

One of my West Point classmates jokingly described Iraq as he found it, as a country run by the Sopranos. It was not run by the rule of law. It was run by thuggery, by terror, by intimidation and by corruption. The Iraqi people were standing up. They are standing up and they are taking hold, and our soldiers and our Marines, our airmen and our sailors see that every day as they serve. They see that commitment. They see the fact that the Iraqi people want us to stand by them as they stand up so they can stand completely on their own.

There are many things that we are going to address in this time tonight, but the first thing that I would like to do is introduce my colleague who has seen firsthand many of the exciting developments. He has seen firsthand the work of our civil affairs soldiers, the work of people in communities, helping them to rebuild, to have a hope and a future, a desire to raise their children and the quality of the people that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kentucky for hosting this hour tonight. These chambers are home to an awful lot of rhetoric, and I hope that our ours tonight will add to the understanding that Americans have of how important it is that we finish this job, we finish this work in Afghanistan and, more importantly, in Iraq.

There were a couple of anecdotes earlier this evening by one of the speakers about folks opposed to the war. I, too, had an opportunity this past week, last Wednesday a week ago today, to attend the service for Lance Corporal Mario Castillo in Brownwood, Texas. I flew back to the district in order to do that.

The church, as my colleagues might expect, was full that morning in

Brownwood, Texas, and the tribute letters that were read as a part of that service from Lance Corporal Castillo's colleagues and comrades-in-arms are very instructive as to the attitude that our military has.

To a person, to a man, these letters talked about what a wonderful person Mario was. His nickname was "Happy." The picture of Mario on the front of the program for the funeral showed a young man in full battle gear, helmet, goggles, but the most incredible white-toothed smile you had ever seen. Obviously, an individual loved by his comrades, respected for the job he was doing, respected for the risks he took. To a person, they talked about what a wonderful fellow Mario was, what a great job he was doing.

They also talked about what they were doing there and why and how important it was that we stay the course and how important it was that we did not let Mario Castillo's and his family's sacrifices go in vain.

As we left the church that day, the good citizens of Brownwood and Early, Texas, literally lined the route, the 5-plus mile route from Brownwood's church out to the Early Cemetery. This was a bright blue Texas day. It was noon, a blazing white sun, precious little wind. It was hot and uncomfortable, and many of these people had stood in that heat, in that sunshine for almost 2 hours, waiting for the procession to move through. An incredible display of support and honor for this family.

These were not people who were hired to come out and stand with the flag and with their hands over their hearts. These were people who loved and cared for Mario Castillo, who did not even know him until this event, young men and women, babies in strollers, teenagers, moms and dads.

This was a working day, Wednesday. Working families were out manning these roads, many of the businesses allowing as much of their staff as they could to go man the roads with the flags. It was just the most incredible site that anyone could have experienced.

□ 2330

I also had the opportunity last November, just after I was elected, to sit with Amy Baker. Amy Baker is the young wife of Brian Baker. Brian was killed in Iraq in early November. I sat with Amy and cried with Amy and her mom and dad. Amy was pregnant with twins, about 7 months old, as they have since been born. We have an obligation to help that family.

But as I sat with Amy during the worst grief period you can possibly imagine, she looked at me with tears in her eyes, her eyes and my eyes, and she said, you tell President Bush under no circumstances is he to back away from this fight, because to do so would dishonor my husband.

We have an obligation to stay this course. We have plenty of blood on the battlefields of Iraq. Our treasure is there. We are winning this battle.

A couple of other things I want to talk about. One of the previous speakers this evening talked about loving our enemies out of their position. I do not think I have ever seen that happen. It may be scriptural, but it just does not happen. As an example: my colleague, I have spent some time in Guantanamo Bay. One of the detainees there, one of the early detainees, who has since been, for all intents and purposes, been awarded an academy award for his act because he was able to convince our people in Guantanamo Bay that he was not in fact a threat; that he just got swept up in the battlefield and was one of those people that should be returned to Afghanistan and Pakistan because he was not a belligerent; he was just an innocent who had gotten swept up in an event beyond his control.

When he presented himself he had suffered a battlefield injury, losing a leg. We nursed him back to health, fitted him with a prosthesis. We loved this individual and we let him go, turned him back to Pakistan and Afghanistan, whereupon he changed his name. He is now referred to as Mohammad Masoud. He has been implicated in the kidnapping and killing of two Chinese engineers, killed one of them; he has been implicated in the car bombing of a bus carrying journalists; he has been implicated in the bombing of a hotel. He is a bad guy.

We loved him. We did the right thing. We should have done what we did for him, fix his wounds and fit him with that prosthesis, but it did not change his heart. He is a bad guy and he wants to hurt us, and so we have to stay the course.

Let me finish up by talking about something that happened earlier this afternoon. We have a life here in America that is relatively fear free. It is fear free because we have good men and women manning the wire, manning the walls, planning the threat points to our country and doing great work in Iraq, and so we rarely have fear enter into our lives. We stand in the center, the epicenter of democracy not only of the United States but of this world. These hallowed Chambers are home to democracy.

Early this evening, we had some sort of alarm go off. Immediately, Members, our colleagues, began to flee these Chambers. And as I walked out of here, I was struck by the fear and the panic in some of our colleagues. It was not Republican or Democrat. It was just that there were folks on both sides of the aisle who looked scared. There was fear in their eyes. They wanted to get out of this building, period; and they were running past me towards the door. And it struck me what an odd event that was.

Here we are in the epicenter of democracy, as I said, and yet a wayward airplane, a twin engine plane, was causing the elected Members of this body to run fleeing out of these Chambers, and what a rare occurrence that

is. What if that was an everyday event? There is a possibility that could be an everyday event, with the threats that we are constantly getting from al Qaeda, from the terrorists around this world. They would love nothing more than to be able to set off car bombs and to have suicide bombers blowing up sidewalk cafes, and all the kinds of things we see happening in Iraq.

They would dearly love to be doing that inside this country, putting a real threat to the fear that some of my colleagues felt this afternoon as they fled these Chambers, on a regular basis instead of the odd occurrence that happens every once in a while.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will yield back to my good friend, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS), and appreciate his hosting this hour tonight.

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. I thank the gentleman from Texas for his commitment to our troops, to the families in his district, and in the country as a whole.

I did find some of the time during both evacuations interesting. Certainly, when we were walking out of the Capitol and moving down the hill, there were gentlemen standing next to me and a policeman came up and said run. I turned to him, along with two colleagues from the other side of the aisle, and we said no. I was asked why not, and I said the first reason why not is to run in a situation like that is only going to create more disorder as opposed to calm. And the second thing, more importantly, is from a standpoint of leadership and the example that is set not only for people in this Nation, for the confidence they can have of their leadership, but more than that, the world is watching this country. It is important that the rhetoric in this Chamber and the way that Members act in this Chamber, their words and their actions reflect a commitment to freedom, to liberty and a resolve to stand firm.

Somebody who has shown great resolve and steadfast leadership in dealing with the war on terror with unconventional warfare and threats emerging in this hemisphere and the other side of the world is the chairman of the House Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare who also now serves as our chief deputy whip, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR). He has become a good friend and is nationally recognized, and certainly recognized in this body as a leader and also a committed student of this issue, and also committed to bringing about all of his energies toward ultimate victory to preserve our freedom here at home and expand freedom in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kentucky, and I want to salute him as well as the gentleman from Texas for their remarks this evening. I also want to recognize the importance of this debate that we

are having here tonight to point out where we are in Iraq, to salute our men and women in uniform, and to really set the record straight.

As the gentleman from Kentucky has said, there has been much rhetoric tonight in this Chamber and throughout the last couple of months aimed at the President's policies and our policies, the American policies in Iraq. And, in fact, it is those policies that I think represent a bold approach to safety for the citizens of this country. They are also a bold approach which represents and reflects an awareness that we must act in this country, in a new world and a new paradigm, against an enemy the likes of which we really have not seen before.

It is this so-called Bush doctrine that takes a very courageous stand against the terrorists and says that we will never, ever condone the killing of innocent people. It is that sense of moral clarity that governs the actions of this administration, and I salute this President for his strength and his courage.

But I think there are some important points that we ought to make this evening, an evening that is just 1 day after the 1-year anniversary of the return of sovereignty to Iraq. A few points I would like to make are, number one, we must fight the terrorists abroad, otherwise the terrorists will strike us here at home.

And thank God, Mr. Speaker, for the men and women in uniform who have sacrificed so much to go over there to defend our liberty that we may enjoy here while they are abroad. I salute them and I salute their families for what they do for all of us here in America.

Secondly, our mission in Iraq is clear: we must help Iraqis build a free nation, strong enough to defend itself and also to advance freedom in the broader Middle East. This, Mr. Speaker, will make us more secure here at home by closing yet another potential terrorist outpost around the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is this notion, that we must seek out the threat and go after it before it comes after us, that this President has pursued. That is our mission in Iraq. That, unfortunately, is what the other side of the aisle has consistently condemned this President for, the strength and courage that he has exhibited.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the sacrifice that our troops make, the sacrifice that their families make is difficult and often painful. But, clearly, Mr. Speaker, their efforts and their sacrifice are worth enduring because it is that sacrifice that lays the foundation for peace for our children and our grandchildren and the future generations of this country.

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Fourth, I would say that our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines serve with pride. They serve with pride and honor despite the attacks, despite what I call the irresponsible rhetoric that has

come from many of the leaders on the other side of the aisle in this body and others questioning the sense or the wisdom of our mission in Iraq.

Once this mission has taken place, once we have gone over to Iraq, the mission the President has set out is very clear. We are there. The exit strategy is for the Iraqi soldiers, the Iraqi security forces to be in place, to be able to defend that country. That is when we will leave. These young men and women have fought bravely, and they deserve our respect and certainly our honor.

I would like at this time to bring to Members' attention a letter from one of my constituents currently serving in Iraq. I think it demonstrates really the sense of pride that is felt by our young men and women in uniform.

Marine Corps Captain Matthew James Markham is an F-18 fighter pilot. He wrote to me recently, "I am about to begin my fifth month of deployment to the Al Anbar province of Iraq, where I am serving as a pilot with the Fighting Bengals, an F-18 Marine Fighter Attack Squadron. Our squadron was here for the election, and I was proud to be piloting a Hornet over Baghdad on that historic day. Since then, we have provided overwatch for many convoys, directed cordon and searches, located and destroyed enemy mortar sites, and provided air cover for many special operations forces raids. While all these jobs are important, nothing has excited us more than to see the increased role the Iraqi security forces and Iraqi defense forces have been providing in defending this young democracy.

"Morale among our individual Marines remains high. I am amazed how enthusiastically our Marines perform their jobs despite the intense heat and long hours, and I am honored to lead such individuals."

Mr. Speaker, I submit that the morale of our troops is high, their mission is clear, and thank God for the young men and women serving in the United States military.

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR) for his remarks and thank him and his team for being willing before September 11 to engage in groundbreaking work in this body to bring to light this issue.

It was important to mention that aviator's comments. One of the things that is not done enough in this body or frankly in the national media is to talk about the tremendous successes our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are seeing on the ground, not seeing simply where our troops are involved, but also with the Iraqis helping themselves. We have had historic events over the last 3 years that have been constantly pooh-pooed by those in the media, by pundits, by those who have never served and without experience in that part of the whole. Always being prophets of doom and gloom, always seeking to minimize or remove every

opportunity for success. It is almost as if some of the commentators, some in this own body, would rather have this country defeated and have this Islamic extremism rampant throughout the world, bringing a cloak of darkness over every area in the world where the light of freedom has begun to shine.

I want to talk about some of the successes because they are significant when we look at the accomplishments of the troops and of the Iraqi people themselves.

A year ago yesterday, there was a formal transfer of power. Iraq had a provisional government. They were in charge. More than that, we followed in January with a historic election where people freely chose their leader. Everybody was able to come out and vote, and 8 million Iraqis responded. America saw the benefit, saw the eyes and the faces of the men and women who went to vote, the tears shed by those who cast that ballot for the first time, who had lived in a culture of fear, hopelessness, and had an ambivalent feeling toward government, now were able to come together under rule of law.

It took a few months to form a government. There are hundreds of tribes, thousands of clan groups, three major religious ethnic groups, yet they formed a government. The commentators and some of the people who are even in this body would say it is a failure because it took so long. If that were true, why did it take the United States when it formed from 1776 to 1787 to even have its Constitution, and then a Civil War many years later, 87 years later, to bring about the true unification of this Nation.

I think the accomplishments of the Iraqi people are remarkable considering the pressures they are under. We will see a constitution that they will write and implement and, finally, full parliamentary elections where the Iraqi people elect that government internally in the country. Polling shows this clearly on the Iraq streets; people have confidence in their local leaders. There are people volunteering for the police force. The power grid is coming back. Services are being delivered in some communities for the first time in over a decade; in some places, for the first time ever.

These are the projects and the work, the bulk of the time that our men and women in uniform have invested themselves in, to rebuild that infrastructure, strengthen this community and provide a helping hand, something that our men and women in uniform have done since the beginning of this country.

Setting a timetable on this insurgency is wrong, and oftentimes I think we do a disservice when we say the Iraqi troops are not standing up to the quality of our Special Operations Forces. That is not the measure of success. The measure of success is that they can adequately protect their communities, that the people in the neighborhoods have confidence in them, and

we have much to be very encouraged and very pleased about.

At this time last year, only one battalion of the new Iraqi Army were trained and equipped. Now there are over 100. There are over 80,000 other forces in border police, Ministry of Interior forces, and facilities protection. The Iraqi government took it upon itself to develop pipeline protection battalions to protect their energy infrastructure.

The jihadists are extremely violent, and only maybe 1 percent of the population. They are formed of a unique core of jihadists who have come from the outside who perform the most spectacular attacks against the Iraqi people, with al-Zarqawi being the best-known leader of that group; former Baathists who were disenfranchised, and frankly corrupt, vulgar, violent politicians whose interest is not the future of Iraq, but is to have power restored under that old regime.

The positive signs we see are dialogue between the Shiite and the Sunnis. Even those who seek to reject the regime are in dialogue now. They understand that militarily there is no possible way that they can win. And the enemies of freedom in these Islamic extremist terrorist groups around the world understand very clearly that the battle for their future has to be won in Iraq. If they cannot win in Iraq against the Iraqi people, then their ideology of hatred, murder, retribution, and of intolerance will be swept away and defeated and cast, to use the President's words, literally on the ash heap of history, where it belongs.

One of the exciting signs that we have seen, 2 weeks ago, Australian hostage Douglas Wood was rescued. No American forces were involved whatsoever. Iraqi security forces receiving intelligence from Iraqi citizens in the neighborhoods passed through the police chain of command, were moved along, and they rescued Douglas Wood. They set him free.

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They captured terrorists in the process, and I think the positive thing is they are willing to shed their blood to build their country and to provide freedom. And working together, we will be able to decrease our forces. In fact, one thing that is exciting to see is our forces are already reduced 21,000 troops since January. That is a positive step.

As we reduce our footprint, they are increasing, they are strengthening; and we are not going to walk away from this until they have the infrastructure in place to be able to stand alone, and I think they are going to be an exciting partner in the future.

There are a small group of regime elements, as I mentioned before, that are resisting at every turn, every opportunity to bring freedom to the very people these folks seek to govern. But they do not seek to govern from an American world view, from a Western

world view based on the rule of law. They seek to govern through corruption, through extortion, and through violence. In fact, General John Vines, commander of the Multinational Corps in Iraq said that if they had a bumper sticker, the former Baathists, the Baath Party rejectionists, it would go something like this: "If you liked Saddam, you'll love us," because they simply want to resume power.

I think that there are some other indicators. I mentioned recruiting and retention, America's active Army components, especially units that are deployed in theater where troops continue to reenlist, to stay with their units. That is also applicable to the Iraqi security forces and the police. Recruiting remains strong. Even though attacks on Iraqis, Iraqi security forces, have approached 70 a day in some cases, that trend of men coming to join remains very strong.

One of the things I deeply regretted when the police station bombing took place on February 18 and 118 people were killed, the news media sent their cameras out to show that carnage of that heinous act of murder, that atrocity. What they did not tell us, Mr. Speaker, was that the next day over 300 men were there to volunteer because their commitment was not to let thugs rule their neighborhoods and rule their cities.

This is a tremendous struggle for the future of a free and democratic Iraq, freedom in that region, and ultimately one that leads to freedom at home to deal with the most pernicious threat that this Nation has faced since World War II.

I think another indicator that is very positive as well is the fact that information from Iraqi citizens themselves is coming forward. Throughout the region, people tire of this. They want a stable life. They want a life of hope, a life of opportunity, a life of freedom. The fact that people braved threats of death in many communities to go out and vote, to cast that vote, shows they want to provide their children with that hope and opportunity. And I think it is a tremendous disservice to have talk in this Chamber about withdrawal timetables.

Even JON CORZINE, Democratic Senator from New Jersey, made a statement today understanding very clearly, regardless of one's views, and I think there is always opportunity and one of the things we have in this body is the great opportunity to disagree openly because on both sides of the aisle on differing view points even within our own caucuses or conferences, we have a deference to the rule of law.

That is not the case for the majority of the world; and when the world watches us, they are viewing our rhetoric through the filter of their world view. When we denigrate our leadership or the regrettable comments of the leadership of the minority party in the House and the Senate about our sol-

diers, sailors, airmen, and Marines; they are fueling the propaganda machine that emboldens the enemies of our way of life, our freedom, and ultimately that rule of law that we cherish so deeply.

I think that it is important that we know that an exit strategy is simply this: it is winning the war. It is sending a clear message of national resolve. It is having a President who is willing to lead from the front, a Defense Secretary who is willing to lead from the front.

Certainly our commanders in the field understand that clearly. I think it is incumbent upon those in this body that we measure our rhetoric, that we understand that the world is watching, and not use our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines as human shields to advance a political agenda, regardless of which side of the aisle that comes from, Mr. Speaker. What is most important is that we stand united, that we stand firm, and that this Nation has given its word to a people that we are going to stand with them until they are free.

And what makes this Nation strong is its ability, the power, and the will to keep its word and to keep its promise. And I think that that is fundamentally important. And I hear that not only, Mr. Speaker, from people from Iraq, from citizens in my district. I hear it from the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines who are serving this Nation right now.

Victory sets its own schedule, wrote Brendan Miniter in a June 21 Wall Street Journal column. I think it is important to understand that determination, as many of us in this body know who have run tough races, many of us who have served in the military know, that prevailing in a situation or a circumstance, a struggle that one might face in life, means staying that course, having that sense of duty and commitment, whether it is to a member of our family, whether it is to our community, whether it is to fellow servicemembers if we are serving in the military at some point. Making that commitment to stand fast is a tremendous elixir and gives hope to those also and infectious enthusiasm to stand firm, and that is the message that we need to send.

I believe that we have a call to duty in this country to finish this job. We have a duty to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines to stand behind them; and we have a duty to the American people and, frankly, to the free world to stand firm.

I would like to take a moment before I close to recognize the accomplishments of one particular unit. We have a unit from the great Commonwealth of Kentucky that distinguished itself and its mission serving, these citizen soldiers from the 617th Military Police Company.

It was established in October 2002 and was reorganized as a combat support

military police company from a headquarters detachment of a combat engineer unit. It came about as a result of force structure changes within the Kentucky Army National Guard, quite apart from the war.

The company strength is currently close to 175 soldiers deployed in theater right now with about 80 in the rear detachment. The soldiers of the 617th are employed in the civilian sector with varying occupations that all of us in this body, back in our communities, those watching on C-SPAN can relate to: school teachers, law enforcement officers, nurses, retail sales and management, information technology professionals, college students, even an attorney.

On 16 November of 2004, after completing training and validation at Fort McCoy, the unit departed for Iraq. The unit remains in Baghdad, and their principal purpose there is to conduct route security and convoy security, and they also support two Iraqi highway patrol stations as a backup, as a force to come alongside and to help these units stand up. The 617th has been very successful in their mission, as evidenced by the achievement and the valor of their soldiers who are willing to stay the course, who understand the importance of this mission, who see the fruits and the potential of their service and their sacrifice and that of their comrades. Soldiers in this unit have received three Silver Star Medals; three Bronze Star Medals for Valor; four Army Commendation Medals for Valor; and, additionally, 15 soldiers have received 17 Purple Hearts.

This is not about counting medals; but when a unit has that level of achievement, that speaks to discipline, to esprit, to integrity, to the acceptance and the inculcation of a sense of duty that is being acted out every day that brings great honor to the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to the United States of America, and to the United States Army. And I thank those members of the unit.

I would like to recognize some who distinguish themselves. One of the things that I learned in the military is what one friend said who won the Congressional Medal of Honor, which is, the valor, the commitment, and the discipline and courage of a man or woman is not measured by what they wear on their chest but some who were in a certain place at a certain time who received that recognition. I believe if we were to talk to these soldiers, they would point that out, that they were just there to help their buddies to accomplish that mission and they did what they believed was their duty, that any of their fellow soldiers would have done as well.

First, I would like to recognize Sergeant Leigh Ann Hester of Nashville, Tennessee. She joined the Guard on April 20, 2001. She was awarded the Silver Star for Valor in Combat. Staff Sergeant Timothy Nein of Henryville, Indiana, joined the Kentucky National

Guard on November 26, 1996, was awarded the Silver Star for Valor. Sergeant Dustin Morris of Murray, Kentucky, joined the Kentucky Army National Guard as a junior in high school under the split option program. This week, as I speak of that, it reminds me of my own journey into the Army, enlisting 29 years ago on June 21. I look at the sacrifices of these young people. He was awarded the Army Commendation Medal V device for Valor.

Specialist Casey Cooper of Eddyville, Kentucky, joined the Kentucky National Guard after completing 2 years of college at Murray State University, awarded the Bronze Star Medal with V device for Valor. Specialist Jason Mike of Radcliff, Kentucky, joined the Kentucky National Guard after September 17, "to give back to my country," he said. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with V device for Valor.

Specialist Jesse Ordunez of Gilbertsville, Kentucky, joined the Kentucky Army National Guard in March of 2000, awarded the Army Commendation Medal with V device for Valor. And, finally, Specialist Ashley Pullen of Edmonton, Kentucky, joined the Kentucky Army National Guard on December 19, 2001, at the age of 17, the same age I was when I enlisted 29 years ago while still attending high school. His award was the Bronze Star with V device for Valor.

When I look at the commitment and the service of these young people, with their sense of duty and commitment, as they stand literally at the tip of spear to preserve our freedom, I am thankful that they are there, that Americans can sleep well and safely tonight as we standing with Iraqi people to see a successful mission as we accept that duty and stand with resolve.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

2474. A letter from the Director, Legislative Affairs Staff, NRCS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Conservation Security Program (RIN: 0578-AA36) received June 1, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2475. A letter from the Director, Office of Executive Secretariat, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule—Conforming Amendments to Implement the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (RIN: 1076-AE54) received June 7, 2005, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

2476. A letter from the Acting White House Liaison, Department of Commerce, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

2477. A letter from the Acting White House Liaison, Department of Commerce, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

2478. A letter from the Acting White House Liaison, Department of Commerce, transmitting a report pursuant to the Federal Vacan-

cies Reform Act of 1998; to the Committee on Government Reform.

2479. A letter from the Chairman, Tennessee Valley Authority, transmitting the Authority's Annual Performance Report for FY 2004, in accordance with the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993; to the Committee on Government Reform.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. PUTNAM: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 345. Resolution providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules, and for other purposes (Rept. 109-159). Referred to the House Calendar.

Mrs. CAPITO: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 346. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2864) to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes (Rept. 109-160). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. HYDE (for himself, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. FALCONE, Mr. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. WELLER, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Mr. ISSA):

H.R. 3100. A bill to authorize measures to deter arms transfers by foreign countries to the People's Republic of China; to the Committee on International Relations.

By Mr. KUHL of New York (for himself, Mr. BOEHLERT, Mr. REYNOLDS, and Mr. HIGGINS):

H.R. 3101. A bill to authorize the United States Department of Energy to remediate the Western New York Nuclear Service Center in the Town of Ashford, New York, and dispose of nuclear waste; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. EDWARDS (for himself and Mr. OBEY):

H.R. 3102. A bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2005 for veterans medical services; to the Committee on Appropriations.

By Mr. SCHIFF (for himself and Mr. PALLONE):

H.R. 3103. A bill to direct the Secretary of State to submit a report outlining the steps taken and plans made by the United States to end Turkey's blockade of Armenia; to the Committee on International Relations.

By Mr. YOUNG of Alaska (for himself, Mr. OBERSTAR, Mr. PETRI, and Mr. DEFAZIO):

H.R. 3104. A bill to provide an extension of highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a law reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, Science, and Resources, for