

Michael Acklin, or "Mikey" as his mother Dorothy calls him, grew up as a bright young boy who enjoyed playing football or video games with the neighborhood kids, many of whom would remain lifelong friends. He played basketball with his dad, who first taught him how to dunk. He was a good kid with a big smile who was known at school to be a prankster, but also a good student.

"My son always had a jolly outlook everyday," said Sergeant Acklin's father, Michael Acklin Sr. "He was just always filled with joy."

Growing up, Mrs. Acklin recalls her son playing the drums, writing poems, and helping younger children at church, bringing a quiet thoughtfulness to everything he did. Michael listened to people, that was his style.

While stationed at Fort Campbell, Michael drove to the base everyday from his rented room in a servicemen's church. When not on duty, he taught Sunday school, attended Bible studies, and helped out around the church by cooking meals or cutting the grass. His fellow soldiers began calling him "Preacher" for his frequent praying before missions. Michael talked to his father about going to a Bible college and becoming a minister when he got back. He was able to find a direction for his life, before he was tragically taken from us.

We thank Michael's parents, Dorothy Acklin and Michael Acklin Sr., for sharing Michael's story with us. As Michael's father said, "I know my son has gone to be with the Lord. I do know my son certainly will be honored."

It is my hope that we have done our part to help honor Michael today, even if only a small part. Words cannot erase the grief and despair that hang over Michael's parents, family and beloved friends. But they can declare boldly to all that Michael was a hero. He gave his life to defend us, and our freedoms. His mission was to spread that freedom, like a light, into places that had only known darkness. Michael may have been taken from us. But the light he planted in people's hearts will never be extinguished.

I ask my colleagues to keep the family of SGT Michael Acklin II in their thoughts and prayers. I know they will be in mine.

I yield the floor.

STAFF SERGEANT MATT KIMMELL

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude to honor the life of a brave soldier from Paxton. Matt Kimmell, 30 years old, died on October 11 in Muqadisyah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device exploded near the military vehicle in which he was riding. With so much of his life before him, Matt risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

A man remembered for kindness, compassion, and deep faith, Matt joined the National Guard just 1 year

after graduating from Faith Christian School in Carlisle. Soon committed to military life, he signed up for a tour of duty and was chosen to be an Army airborne ranger. When his training was over, he returned home, studied law enforcement at Vincennes University and joined the Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Department as a road patrol deputy, where he worked 3 years before re-enlisting in the Army. Universally liked and admired, his friends and colleagues recounted that Matt had not joined the military for glory but rather because of his deep sense of right and wrong.

Matt served as the newspaper carrier for the Sullivan Daily Times during his childhood in Paxton. Even as a young boy, customers remember him as prompt and diligent. All of his actions were underscored by his Christian faith. Three years ago, he married Mylissa Hall, a nurse from Worthington. He loved children and the couple planned to start a family when he returned from Iraq. A friend of Matt's told the Terre Haute Tribune Star, "He broke the mold when they made him." Matt's small hometown has been hit hard by the death of one of their own. This week, townsfolk planted 542 small American flags down a half mile stretch in Matt's honor and they have started a fund to build a monument to him.

Matt was killed while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group, based at Fort Campbell, KY. This brave young soldier leaves behind his wife Mylissa; his father Pastor Larry Kimmell and his mother Jeanne; his brother Matt; and his sister Suzanne.

Today, I join Matt's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Matt, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.

Matt was known for his dedication to his family, his faith, and his love of country. Today and always, Matt will be remembered by family members, friends, and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Matt's sacrifice, I am reminded of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fallen soldiers in Gettysburg: We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am

certain that the impact of Matt's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Matt Kimmell in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of the U.S. Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy, and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that families like Matt's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Matt.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of the Senator from Texas I be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAQ ELECTION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this past weekend, the people of Iraq voted on their new constitution. Soon they will participate in parliamentary elections that will provide for a fully constitutional government. By any measure of history, the nation of Iraq has made remarkable progress in the past 2 years despite the criticism of naysayers who seem, in some instances, intent on scoring political points more than encouraging our brave comrades to win the war in Iraq and assist us in winning the larger global war on terror.

Iraqi participation in this election yesterday was strong, including Sunnis who boycotted the January election. The election was also more peaceful than the previous election, in large measure due to the determination and professionalism of the new Iraqi security services. If 3 short years ago someone would have predicted the Iraqis would vote on a constitution in the near future, the same critics who are

today calling for retreat would have scoffed.

However, the critics have consistently underestimated the Iraqi people, the American military, and, I might add, the American people as well. America must remain engaged in stabilization efforts in order to ensure the triumph of democracy over the return of tyranny.

Since the beginning of the war on terror, members of our military have been asked to execute both difficult and dangerous work. As always, the good men and women who serve have met these challenges with determination, courage, and honor. They are a credit to our Nation and deserve our deepest respect and gratitude.

We all know there remains difficult work to be done in Iraq. Terrorists regard this country as the central battle ground in the war on terror, and these enemies acknowledge no standards and no rules governing warfare. Their stated goal is to bring great harm to any government or country that opposes their actions. We in the United States, of course, are a primary target, and we must therefore continue to show leadership and courage in the fight.

Some critics have said that we should cut and run, that we should leave according to some arbitrary timetable, claiming that the Pentagon and the administration have failed to be realistic about the problems that exist in Iraq and the challenges that lie ahead. I firmly disagree.

President Bush and other members of the administration have consistently told the American people that our efforts in Iraq will require much sacrifice, but that we must stay the course. We must not let the politics of the moment undermine the path to democracy in Iraq. We should consider, though, the alternative: what would happen if our troops left Iraq prematurely. The country would likely face a civil war or would fragment in a dangerous way. Terrorists such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaida's No. 2 operative and Bin Laden's deputy, and Abu Masab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaida's chief terrorist in Iraq, and others who vow to destroy America could be counted on to seize power in at least a portion of the country. At a minimum, they would find patronage in any regime to plan attacks and train terrorists and offer them harbor and material support.

The consequences of a U.S. pullout and coalition pullout from Iraq should not be in question, as a letter from Zawahiri and Zarqawi released this week by the Pentagon makes clear. In this letter, Zawahiri tells Zarqawi when the United States leaves Iraq that al-Qaida must be prepared to claim the most political territory possible in the inevitable vacuum of power that will arise.

Yes, Iraq would be more dangerous, not less, if we fail to finish the job. Failure in Iraq would empower and embolden the enemy. Failure to stay the

course and lay the foundation of a functioning democracy would result in more, not fewer, terrorist attacks, including here at home.

I must also express disappointment with those in this country who are trying to use the situation in Iraq to score political points or undermine America's resolve.

Last week, the leadership in the Senate on the other side of the aisle put out a statement claiming that we do not have a plan for victory in Iraq. Nothing could be further from the truth.

For the record, the Senate has been briefed numerous times by our military leadership regarding the plan in Iraq and the war on terror. This weekend's successful election was a key element in that plan to build a stable and self-governing Iraq. Sadly, the claim by political partisans that we do not have a plan in Iraq is nothing more than politics at its worst. To imply that our military leadership does not understand what it takes to win in Iraq is simply wrong and even insulting.

I trust the wisdom and experience of GEN John Abizaid and GEN George Casey over the many armchair generals inside the beltway who seem to pontificate with great frequency. They understand the facts on the ground and what is necessary to achieve victory.

Finally, some critics are fond of comparing Iraq to Vietnam. Yet the differences far outweigh the flawed comparisons some attempt to make. The only obvious and striking similarity is that the enemy is counting on American public opinion to force a retreat. In fact, Zawahiri noted in his letter that "we are in a battle and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media." Al-Qaida understands that they cannot win on the battlefield against the spirit of determination of America and our allies. Prematurely leaving Iraq would have catastrophic consequences far greater than those we saw in Vietnam, as retreat would, in effect, hand the Iraqi people over to the terrorists who have stated their intention and proven their ability to launch horrifying attacks.

Yes, we have seen significant progress in Iraq, and our confidence in the desire of the Iraqi people to self-govern is well placed as we have seen the value that they place on liberty. We have seen record numbers show up at the polls, more than 60 percent, despite threats of car bombs and other acts of terrorism. We have seen Iraqi elected officials vocally defend the values of freedom and democracy at their own peril. In 2½ years, this country has moved from the rule of a tyrant to implementing the rule of law. They have held national elections, and they were followed by the writing of a constitution. They are formulating their own military and security forces that grow more and more capable.

While much remains to be done, much has been accomplished. To ignore these strides forward would be to di-

minish the good work of both the Iraqi people and the United States and their contributions that have allowed this effort to occur. Yes, we must stay the course. In so doing we honor both the ideals upon which this great Nation was founded and our own national security interests. America has sacrificed much in this global war, and we do not yet know the trials that will come. We can be confident that there will be a struggle and a greater sacrifice, but we can also be confident that in the midst of this struggle and sacrifice there is hope.

We are encouraging democracy, freedom, progress, free markets, self-governance, and the rule of law and the Iraqi people are reaching out and taking hold of that hope.

So we must stand confident and strong, shoulder to shoulder with the Iraqi people in the defense of their nascent democracy, confident that freedom will, in the end, triumph.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). The Senator from Tennessee is recognized for up to 10 minutes.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask the Chair to inform me when I have 1 minute remaining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will so inform the Senator.

KEEPING OUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, in May, Senator JEFF BINGAMAN and I, with the encouragement of the Senate Energy Committee Chairman, PETE DOMENICI, asked the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering and the Institute of Medicine the following question: What are the top 10 actions, in priority order, that Federal policymakers could take over the next decade to help the United States keep our advantage in science and technology? That was our question.

To answer the question, the academies assembled a distinguished panel of business, government, and university leaders, headed by Norm Augustine, the former chair of Lockheed Martin. The panel also included three Nobel Prize laureates. The panel took our question seriously, and I intend to do everything within my power to take their recommendations seriously. Tomorrow, the Energy Committee will take the first step in that response by holding a hearing to hear from Mr. Augustine and the Academies. It will be the first opportunity Congress will have to hear their answer to our question.

This hearing is primarily about brainpower and the relationship of brainpower to good American jobs. The United States produces almost one-third of all the wealth in the world, in terms of gross domestic product but has only 5 percent of the world's population. We are a fortunate country indeed. The Academies explained this phenomenon in this way: