

And, Mr. Speaker, those of us who work here in this building, in this Capitol, literally owe our lives to the heroes of United Flight 93.

This week, as family members of the 33 passengers and seven crew of Flight 93 have been here on Capitol Hill, it is time to say "yes" to funding the Flight 93 National Memorial plan for the site in Pennsylvania where the plane ultimately crashed. Tom Burnett and the other brave passengers deserve this fitting memorial, and we should move ahead with the project immediately so the land can be secured.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in frequent contact with Tom Burnett's parents, Tom, Sr., and Beverly Burnett, about the site and about the memorial. They have long expressed concern that this sacred ground was still in jeopardy of purchase by other parties and not properly protected.

On that fateful day, on his last phone call to his wife, Deena, Tom Burnett said, and I am quoting, "We have got to do something. I know we are all going to die. There's three of us who are going to do something about it."

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what Tom Burnett and the other passengers of Flight 93 did. They stepped forward in an amazing show of patriotism and self-sacrifice. Now it is time for Congress to step forward and do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely outrageous to continue to block this memorial to honor the heroic actions of the passengers of Flight 93. Let me repeat that: it is absolutely outrageous to continue to block this memorial to honor the heroic actions of the passengers on Flight 93. It is time for Congress to come together and do what is right, just as the passengers of Flight 93 did what was right at the cost of their own lives.

Mr. Speaker, we should live up to our commitment now. Flight 93 family members have passionately explained to us again this week why the 1,200 acres are needed to properly tell the story of Flight 93. Now it is our turn to do our part.

Tom Burnett, Jr., and the other heroes of Flight 93 showed us what bravery is all about. Now we need to step forward to honor their courageous legacy. We must never forget the ultimate sacrifice made by the passengers and crew of United Flight 93 on September 11, 2001. Let's do the right thing. Let's do the honorable thing. Let's support full funding for the Flight 93 memorial.

MAXIMIZING OUR MEDICAL RESEARCH DOLLARS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, for over a century the Federal Government has had a strong commitment to biomedical, behavioral, and population-based research conducted at National

Institutes of Health centers around the Nation.

The research conducted at these facilities, which include several in my congressional district in New Jersey, is responsible for the continued development of an ever-expanding research base and has contributed to medical advances that have profoundly improved the length and quality of life for millions of Americans.

Over the years, I have vigorously supported efforts to increase funding for NIH, including efforts to double NIH funding in recent years. However, I am now concerned the President and House Republicans are abandoning their commitment to NIH. Last year, they cut overall funding for medical research, and this year the House Republican budget proposal would only provide the same funding for NIH as last year. This would result in an even larger cut than last year in which all but three NIH institutes and centers would see their budgets fall for the second year in a row.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when Republicans are retreating on their commitment to health research, we must remain vigilant in demanding the necessary funding to continue groundbreaking research. We must also work to ensure that those entities receiving NIH funding grants are utilizing them to the best of their ability. And I think we must explore ways to consolidate research efforts around the Nation so that we can eliminate any duplication and maximize every research dollar.

In my congressional district, we are fortunate to host some of the finest research and health care institutions in the country that receive NIH grant funding. The city of New Brunswick, nicknamed the Health Care City, is home to Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, Johnson & Johnson, the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, and the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, among many other world-class facilities. Our State government also has committed to moving forward with the Stem Cell Institute of New Jersey New Brunswick.

Crucial to this continued success, however, is ensuring that we have a coherent structure in place to fully maximize our ability to secure Federal research dollars, corporate investment, and human talent.

I strongly believe that merging the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and the School of Public Health with Rutgers University in New Brunswick is critical to achieving this goal. Although the medical school is now part of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, it shares many facilities, faculty, and research responsibilities with Rutgers. In fact, it was once called the Rutgers University Medical School.

In addition, the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, a national leader in cancer care and research, is comprised of faculty from the medical school and Rutgers in nearly equal numbers.

Strengthening these relationships and eliminating the duplication and disorganization that results from administrative separation of health sciences at Rutgers and UMDNJ will go a long way toward increasing the scarce flow of Federal research dollars to New Jersey.

By unifying our medical education institutions under one umbrella, we will not only have a better chance of competing for large medical grants and contracts, but also attract the best faculty and students from around the Nation.

Furthermore, we will create a stronger platform from which new intellectual property can be generated in close proximity to the largest concentration of health care companies in the Nation. We can reinvigorate the cooperation between the medical experts at these companies and the academic leaders at our new unified medical school. With these companies already in place right in our backyard, just imagine the economic growth that we could foster by simply bridging all of our health care academic minds into one institution.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that we should explore similar consolidation plans at other research institutions in New Jersey and around the Nation to maintain our momentum in the field of medical discovery and invention. Our State government in New Jersey has to explore the possibility of integrating the other medical schools and research facilities in New Jersey with nearby institutions.

Mr. Speaker, by combining the best of Rutgers and the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, I am confident New Jersey will remain a national leader in medical care, education and research so that we can build a stronger State economy, and even more importantly, improve the health care of all New Jerseyans.

□ 1830

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PROTESTS IN BELARUS

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the disturbing reports that I have been hearing out of Belarus over the past 24 hours.

Yesterday was the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, and also the day of the first major demonstration against President Lukashenko since the fraudulent elections on March 19. Early on Wednesday, opposition candidate Aleksander Milinkevich was brought to police headquarters before the rally and warned by the KGB the consequences of holding the rally and asked to sign a document stating that he knew what would happen should the rally continue.

Mr. Milinkevich boldly refused. And then today around 12 p.m. in Minsk, Mr. Milinkevich was giving an interview to reporters when the police showed up and took him to the police station. He was charged with organizing an unsanctioned rally with regards to yesterday's rally in Minsk and received a 15-day sentence.

Also this morning, two other UDF leaders, Sergiy Kalyakin, the Chairman of the Communist Party, and Alexander Bukhostov, leader of the Belarusian Labor Party, were summoned to the City Executive Committee of the Minsk Interior Affairs regarding their application to hold another prodemocratic rally in Minsk on May 1. They were then taken by police to the police department and charged with organizing yesterday's unsanctioned rally in Minsk. Mr. Bukhostov received 15 days in jail, and Mr. Kalyakin received 14 days.

And perhaps the most terrible and intimidating incident I have heard of occurred yesterday prior to the rally in Minsk. Prior to a speech at the rally, opposition activist Anatoly Lebedko was kidnapped, beaten and interrogated for several hours by members of the KGB, which we can only assume was ordered by the office of President Lukashenko. Mr. Lebedko was given a message by these thugs when he was shoved out of the car outside of Minsk. All they had to say was, we hope you have drawn the appropriate conclusions from this.

However, the conclusions that I and the Belarusian people have drawn is that despite these continued threats from Lukashenko, the spirit of freedom has not died in Belarus. All these people wanted to do was hold a peaceful rally to honor those Belarusians who died in the Chernobyl accident, and to come together as a country.

President Lukashenko may have tried to stop the rally through these intimidation tactics, but even if only one person had shown up despite this ongoing threat of violence, it means that freedom lived within the hearts and minds of these people, and someday it will come to them again.

I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday in Minsk, thousands of Belarusians rallied in support of freedom.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE WAR IN IRAQ

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, 1 month ago the American people stopped to remember the third anniversary of the beginning of the Iraq war. We thought first and foremost of the selflessness, patriotism and heroism by our troops, our National Guard and Reserves.

We also remembered those who have been wounded in battle, and who need our support more than ever. And we never forget those whose service meant giving their lives for their country.

Americans are united in this remembrance, but so, too, Mr. Speaker, do Americans understand that we need a new direction in Iraq, that Congress must take up its responsibility and demand that our policy be based on honest assessments from our own military.

For too long the U.S. military's leadership has been ignored and stifled by a White House motivated by its own political and ideological agenda. Indeed, when General Eric Shinseki told Congress in 2002 that we would need almost 400,000 troops to ensure a short and peaceful occupation, administration officials said he was wildly off the mark and quickly forced him into retirement.

Earlier this year, when General Casey conceded that U.S. forces were stretched, the Pentagon rushed to issue a clarifying statement. And when six former generals who worked closely with Secretary Rumsfeld called for his resignation, the President wasted no time reiterating his unyielding support for Mr. Rumsfeld.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I had confidence that this White House and Secretary of Defense could look beyond their ideological agenda to do what is right for our national security and our troops, but I do not, which is why I believe the responsibility to take the lead on Iraq now falls to the Congress.

Yes, Congress was delinquent for too long in its oversight responsibilities in the prosecution of the war, writing blank checks to the administration with no requirements for progress or accountability to the taxpayers, but in declaring that 2006 should be a year of transition in this year's defense appropriation bill, and in finally requiring regular status reports from the administration, Congress at last showed that it might be serious about handing over the security of Iraq to the Iraqi people.

Unfortunately, 4 months into 2006, as insurgent violence occurs daily, that

process has still not begun, with no regular hearings, calls for accountability or investigations. The result is that American troops find themselves increasingly in the crossfire of warring religious groups. Just last weekend eight more U.S. troops lost their lives. And the President now says our troops will be in the middle of this Iraqi civil war at least until 2009.

Mr. Speaker, as we go into the fourth year, it is well past time for a firm plan to redeploy our troops. This is consistent with the views of our troops, nearly three-quarters of whom say 2006 is the year to succeed or reassess. It is the view of the top U.S. commander in Iraq, General George Casey, who told Congress, our troops are "one of the elements that fuels the insurgency."

So the starting point for new policy is to be serious about making 2006 a year of transition, and signaling to all of the parties in Iraq and the region that they must take responsibility.

We must hear the advice of our own military about how to best reduce troop levels without fear of reprisal from the administration. We must have a timetable for a phased reduction of our troops, ensuring a minimal presence within 12 months, with most redeployed by the end of 2006. We must expand the training of Iraqi military and police units, and demand that they be linked to a reduction in American forces.

We must establish a contract, as we did in Bosnia, requiring the key powers in the region, including Saudi Arabia and Jordan, to be more actively involved in security and reconstruction. Iraq's neighbors must understand that they have a stake in its success.

We should redeploy our National Guard to help with homeland security efforts. In coping with disaster, bird flu or another terrorist attack, our National Guard must be prepared. But a third of Louisiana's Guard was in Iraq during Katrina, slowing relief efforts with deadly consequences. And over 500 of my State's National Guard troops are deployed in Afghanistan, because the regular Army remains in Iraq in such large numbers.

And with respect to Afghanistan, where the Taliban is resurgent since U.S. troops were diverted to Iraq, we should refocus our efforts there and resume our work to stabilize a country that has provided the base for global terrorism.

Taken together, this new policy will produce a minimal but flexible U.S. troop presence in Iraq within a year. That is how we best maintain a strong military, while making America more secure. Our troops deserve a Congress that takes its oversight responsibilities seriously, not one that acts as a rubber stamp for a White House who is clearly off track.

Our troops are bearing the burden of our indecision. We owe them a full and open debate and a new direction. It is not a matter of partisanship, but a matter of patriotism of our country's stewardship and security.