

asked the questions of what happened to the troops, the amount of troops, what happened to the KEVLAR vests, the Humvees; how come there are not enough men and women that the ambassador and the general had asked for.

Not a question. Nobody is responsible. Nobody ever got fired, let alone the questions about the intelligence going into it.

Take Medicare. We debated here on this floor, and I voted against that bill and said it was going to lead to great confusion to seniors. Rather than a simple plan, letting negotiations happen, letting reimportation happen, and letting generics hit the market, which all would drive the price down of prescription drugs and save money, Members here said and the administration said it will only cost \$390 billion over 10 years. Before the ink was dry, it rose to \$790 billion. So all the taxpayers are going to have to pay double what they were told and everybody in the administration knew.

One person who said, here is what the report said, was under threat of being fired if they let that information out. Yet now, with 2 years to prepare, 2 years to get ready, the Web site, run by HHS, had the information wrong. The catalogue they sent out to every senior had it wrong. It has led to massive confusion where seniors now are sometimes double enrolled, cannot get enrolled, and where States are having to step in for the poorest of the poor because they cannot get their plan. It is run like, as some people say, they couldn't run a one-car parade if they tried.

Again, that massive incompetency and the inability of this Congress to have oversight and keep people's feet to the fire and hold them accountable, to ask the questions and get the answers the American people want are not being done today.

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And the incompetency is not isolated to Medicare or Iraq. Take the response to Hurricane Katrina: when we saw that tape, we now learn that, in fact, Mr. Brown, or known to the rest of us as Brownie, was doing a heck of a job, and he gets fired, and yet it is Chertoff who is still head of the Homeland Security Department, had no idea what was going on, no line authority, never involved himself, and we had a massive disaster.

When you run through the economy, Iraq and the deficit, what this President has done, I would settle, and I think the rest of the country would be quite happy if we had a competent conservative rather than the compassionate conservative that we were promised. The American people are not looking for a compassionate conservative, a fiscal conservative, or a social conservative. A competent conservative would do America well.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

HONORING FIRST SERGEANT BRAD KASAL

Mr. KING of Iowa. 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 Iowa?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to deliver the story of an American hero, Marine First Sergeant Brad Kasal, to this Chamber and to the American people.

Sergeant Kasal was born in the small town of Afton, Iowa, where he was raised on a small family farm and where he learned Midwestern values which would later serve him very well in his service in the United States Marine Corps. Sergeant Kasal is 39 years old and has served three tours of duty in Iraq and Kuwait. He is a member of Weapons Company, Third Battalion, First Marine Regiment, also known as "Thundering Third."

When you hear Sergeant Kasal's story of courage and sacrifice, it is not surprising that he comes from a solid family of patriots who have also served our country.

Brad Kasal's brother Jeff is a retired Army paratrooper who served our country in Operation Desert Storm with the 82nd Airborne and now works in Iraq. Brad's brother Kelly served in the United States Army, and his brother Kevin also served in the United States Marine Corps. And 50 years ago, their father, Gerald, served in the Iowa National Guard.

But even among the patriotic Kasal family, Sergeant Brad Kasal's experiences set him apart. During his three tours of duty in Iraq and Kuwait, Sergeant Kasal has received two Purple Hearts. His first was awarded for an incident in August 2004 for shrapnel wounds to the face, neck and shoulder from a rocket-propelled grenade.

His second Purple Heart came from events which took place on November 13, 2004, when Marines were in their fifth day of Operation Phantom Fury, which was a battle to free Fallujah from the grip of the terrorists.

Sergeant Kasal was patrolling the streets and had the duty of clearing terrorists from buildings when he saw a fellow marine wounded and leaving a building. He told him that three more of their men were still inside and under attack.

Without regard for his own life and safety, Sergeant Kasal charged into the

building to defend and rescue his men. It was then that he saw several dead Iraqis, the wounded Marines, and a terrorist confronting him with an AK-47 rifle less than 2 feet away. While he managed to dodge the bullets and kill that terrorist, another terrorist was able to sneak up behind him and open fire. Sergeant Kasal was hit by those bullets and fell to the ground. He was dizzy and disoriented from his wounds, but he immediately began caring for another wounded marine. Sergeant Kasal knew he had to stay alive to save himself and the others. As he struggled to remain conscious, a grenade dropped onto the ground next to a wounded marine.

Responding to his instinct to protect his comrade, Sergeant Kasal threw his own body over Private First Class Alexander Nicoll. Thankfully, Sergeant Kasal's helmet and body armor protected his vital organs, but he took the full brunt of shrapnel to his back, shoulders and legs. For the next 45 minutes as he lay grievously wounded, Sergeant Kasal used his 9 millimeter handgun to defend himself in a prolonged shootout where he suffered another bullet wound.

This picture shows Sergeant Kasal being helped from the building still clutching his trusty 9 millimeter handgun. He explained that he kept the gun because he was being evacuated through a kill zone where he knew a number of terrorists remained, and he feared his weapon might be needed to fend off more potential attackers.

Long after he was rescued, Sergeant Kasal learned the full extent of his injuries. Ultimately, he lost 60 percent of his blood. He took 40 pieces of shrapnel wounds, and suffered seven bullet wounds.

Despite his wounds, Sergeant Kasal said his efforts and wounds were worthwhile. The marine whom he shielded, Private Nicoll, had survived the battle.

Sergeant Kasal must undergo constant medical procedures and therapy, but his ultimate goal is to recover so he can resume his service in the Marine Corps to defend you and me and the people of our country.

Marine First Sergeant Brad Kasal does not think of himself as a hero. He is a model Marine and hero for Americans.

In all wars, there are stories of bravery and heroism. The story of Marine First Sergeant Brad Kasal stands out among them. There is no doubt that Sergeant Kasal's actions on November 13, 2004, prove he is an honorable marine with a bigger passion for his fellow marines and our country than his own life and safety.

Sergeant Kasal believes the values he learned in his Iowa upbringing, as well as the strong spirit of the Marine Corps, gave him the strength and will to persevere in an otherwise unsurvivable situation.

Sergeant Kasal makes me proud to be an Iowan and an American; and I thank him for his bravery, honor, and patriotism.

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

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

MILITARY DISCRIMINATES AGAINST GAYS

Ms. WOOLSEY. 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 California?

There was no objection.

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, at a time of declining morale, when we are barely able to maintain a volunteer force, the sign on the Army recruiter's door might as well say: "Openly gay Americans need not apply."

Here is the military, struggling to meet its recruitment goals and in some instances even lowering its standards as a result, but still they are turning away and actively weeding out an entire group of people for no other reason than raw prejudice. How dumb is that.

But yesterday, the Supreme Court ruled that universities receiving Federal funding could not ban military recruiters from their campuses in protest over the military's discrimination against gay Americans. I am not going to relitigate that case here on the House floor, but I do think and I sincerely hope that this case can shine a national spotlight on the absolute folly of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

Because of their sexual orientation and their unwillingness to conceal it, selfless patriotic Americans are forbidden from serving their country. They cannot serve even though their skills are desperately needed, even though there are available slots, even though they are volunteering for duty that most of their peers have opted against.

How does the Army expect its people to be all they can be when it will not allow them to be who they are. What can be more un-American? Yet another example of a Nation preaching the rhetoric of freedom and self-determination around the world while undermining those very values here at home. It is a civil rights outrage to be sure.

But on a purely practical note, it is just plain bad national security policy. Is this any way to defend a Nation, by purging the military of talented and dedicated soldiers because they are unashamed of their love for members of the same sex? It is arbitrary, irrational, and dangerous.

A GAO report, released about a year ago, concluded that 10,000 Americans have received military discharges under a policy of "don't ask, don't tell" at a cost to taxpayers of roughly \$191 million.

In recent years, since the launch of wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, the military has purged several Farsi and Arabic translation specialists because they were discovered to be gay. This shocking and incomprehensible personnel decision has prompted my friend and colleague, Barney Frank, to relabel the Pentagon policy: "Don't ask, don't tell, don't translate."

How is that for a forward-looking national defense strategy? At just the moment when we need to understand Mideastern culture and win over hearts and minds of its people, the military dismisses the people who speak their language. The 9/11 Commission cited a shortage of Arabic speakers, and, thus, an inability to translate key intelligence as a handicap in our ability to predict the September 11 attacks.

Mr. Speaker, I have been outspoken in my opposition of the Iraq war and my belief that now is the time to bring our troops home. But I am antiwar, not antisoldier, not antimilitary. I want us to have the strongest possible national defense, a goal that is in no way incompatible with rooting out intolerance and protecting equal rights.

There is no trade-off, no balance of competing interests in this case. If "don't ask, don't tell" fails the social justice test and detracts from national security, what possible use could it have?

I would have thought that a 3-year \$250 billion war that is stretching the military to its breaking point would compel the Congress and the Pentagon to reexamine this block-headed policy. Mr. Speaker, I hope that we will.

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

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

FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS INFILTRATING OUR U.S. PORTS

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to address the House for 5 minutes at this time.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, in the world we live in today, there is nothing more important than American security. This is one reason I was surprised to learn there is a plan to let a foreign government, through its government-controlled company, run major ports throughout our country, including part of the port of Beaumont in my district in southeast Texas.

We hear that the UAE ports deal will not jeopardize national security be-

cause this government company will actually help us with homeland security. My question is: Are we now going to outsource national security as well?

The recent disturbing decision to allow the United Arab Emirates to have a stake in operations in U.S. ports is a dangerous decision that defies common sense.

History has shown that friends of the United States come and go. Those who are our friends today may not be our friends tomorrow. The UAE, although alleged friends today, have not been our friends in the past; and there is nothing that proves that they will continue that friendship in the future.

The UAE recognized the Taliban. It laundered money that financed the 9/11 terrorists, and it continues to participate in the Arab boycott against our ally, Israel. This country harbored terrorists that played a role in killing 3,000 people on September 11. We cannot ignore their perilous past.

Mr. Speaker, last time I checked, we were at war against the Taliban. I find it extremely hard to believe that we would want to give a country that supported our enemies access to our ports. If this deal were to go through, these same foreign entities would have access to U.S. manifests showing what cargo is being shipped and where and when it is going. According to a recent Zogby poll taken in October 2005, it found that over 70 percent of those who live in the UAE do not even like the United States. If this arrangement goes through, who is going to stop a potential terrorist from posing as someone else, going to work for one of these ports, and gaining access to information with the intent to harm Americans? We do not need to take this risk with national security.

Currently, only 5 percent of the more than 14 million containers entering through our Nation's ports are screened. Clearly, our ports are already vulnerable. In a day and age where we are allowing 95 percent of the cargo to come and go through our ports without inspection, it is hard to believe that we are willing to give security to a foreign entity, much less one that has anything but a strong record in preventing terrorism. Even the U.S. Coast Guard, which is in charge of port security, seems uneasy about letting this take place.

Many Americans across our land are opposed to this foreign operation in our homeland. The port of Beaumont in Texas, one of the operations proposed to be run by this UAE deal, ships one-third of the military cargo going to Iraq and Afghanistan. This is more than any other U.S. port. Now we want to give a foreign government access to U.S. military shipping information? I think not.

We cannot allow our ports to be infiltrated by foreign governments. And this is not a partisan issue; it is an issue of national security. For this reason, I have joined colleagues from across the aisle in introducing a bill