

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

that will stop this UAE operation from going through. I have joined the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) in introducing legislation to prevent this dangerous and deceptive deal. This deal should become a “no deal” before it becomes an ordeal.

Mr. Speaker, just last week we introduced the Port Security Act of 2006. This is the House version of legislation already introduced in the Senate. This bipartisan legislation will prohibit foreign state-owned companies from controlling operations at U.S. ports and stop the UAE deal by mandating a congressional review of existing foreign state-owned companies that are operating in American ports. There is an innate and inherit problem, not to mention a serious national security risk, with letting state-owned foreign companies buy interests in American ports.

I am not opposed to foreign privately owned companies operating in our country. I understand we live in a global economy. Foreign ownership of a hotel or car company is one thing, but foreign government ownership in port operations, especially those that handle military cargo, is absurd.

There are entirely too many issues that need to be ironed out before we start offering our ports and our national security up to foreign governments for sale or for lease. This decision is unwise. It is a risky business. This ought not to be. And that is just the way it is.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FOREIGN OPERATIONS REQUEST

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, the President's budget request for fiscal year 2007 proposes 20 percent more military aid to Azerbaijan than to Armenia. This request is a clear breach of an agreement struck between the White House and the Congress in 2001 to maintain parity in U.S. military aid to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Mr. Speaker, the parity agreement is unfortunately a battle that the Armenian people have had to fight in the past. The fiscal year 2005 Presidential request was similar in that it called for more military funding to Azerbaijan.

However, the Congress reversed the President to ensure military parity in the fiscal year 2005 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act. After that battle and the President's 2006 budget request

that included parity, I thought the President's fiscal year 2007 budget would continue that policy. But unfortunately that was not the case. A lack of military parity would, in my opinion, weaken ongoing peace negotiations regarding Nagorno Karabakh, among other things.

It will also contribute to further instability in the region, and it undermines the role of the United States as an impartial mediator of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Mr. Speaker, the government should not be rewarding the Government of Azerbaijan for walking away from the organization for security and cooperation in Europe's Key West peace talks, the most promising opportunity to resolve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict in nearly a decade.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the administration's budget also calls for drastic cuts in economic assistance to Armenia. I was discouraged to see that the President requested a 33 percent decrease in economic aid from \$74.4 million last year to \$50 million this year. Technical and developmental assistance and investment is essential to Armenia. This funding is key to democratic stability and economic reform in the country.

Mr. Speaker, is this the message we want to send to our friends in Armenia? Do we want to cut economic aid to a country that is terrorized by its neighbors and is shut off on its eastern and western borders due to an illegal blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan?

Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks I will advocate to the Foreign Operations Subcommittee to restore military parity, to increase economic assistance to Armenia and to provide for humanitarian aid to the people of Nagorno Karabakh. It is incredibly important to reward our allies and to send a message to Azerbaijan and Turkey that ethnically charged genocides, illegal blockades of sovereign nations, and the constant harassment of the Armenian people will not be tolerated.

AMEND THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961

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

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing, and I have just introduced a bill, to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to limit the provisions of the United States military assistance and the sale, transfer or licensing of United States military equipment or technology to Ethiopia.

The bill requires that before the United States provides military equipment to the regime in Addis Ababa that our President certifies that the Government of Ethiopia is not using our equipment or assistance against prodemocracy advocates or peaceful civilian protesters in Ethiopia. Is that too much to ask?

It is an outrage that in Ethiopia that over 80 opposition leaders and human rights activists and journalists have been recently charged with treason, violent conspiracy and genocide. These prisoners of conscience face brutal captivity and the possibility of death sentences. They include 10 newly elected members of the Parliament and other officials of the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party, that is the CUD.

These brave souls face charges filed against them by a corrupt and repressive government. This same government blatantly stalled the last election, making a sham out of the democratic process. Five of those being charged with criminal behavior work for the Voice of America. One of those being held is Dr. Berhanu Nega. He is an American citizen and mayor of Ethiopia's largest city. Dr. Nega is an advocate of democracy. He faces the death penalty for his involvement in mass protests over the election fraud that took place in Ethiopia during their last election.

Now, in January, the British Government cut the equivalent of \$88 million in aid in support to Ethiopia. This was due to its concerns about the governance and human rights issues arising from this disputed election. Other international donors have taken similar measures.

My legislation requires certification by the President of the United States that our military equipment provided to Ethiopia is not being used to beat down those who would bring honest and democratic government to that troubled land. In Ethiopia, it is incumbent upon us as Americans to be on the side of those struggling for honest and democratic government, not on the side of their oppressor.

No pragmatic strategy can justify the United States backing a regime that stole the last election and has brutalized their own people and will, at some point, disintegrate from its own corruption and incompetent ways. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and supporting the democratic movement in Ethiopia, just as we did with a similar movement in Ukraine just 2 short years ago and in other countries throughout the world where the future was in play and human freedom was in the balance.

That is what being an elected representative of the American people is all about, standing for our ideals and our principles. And nowhere could that be made more clear than to stand with the people of Ethiopia, who are struggling to make a democratic government, to form a democratic government, and to have honest government and the recognition and respect for people's rights within their own country.

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