

sailors, airmen and marines—and their loved ones waiting patiently at home—for their service and their dedication to duty.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, it is my job and my honor to look after the interests of all of our military personnel. We must ensure that the military continues to have the tools it needs to remain the most powerful fighting force the world has ever known.

Our Texas military bases are some of the strongest components of our military readiness in the current global war against terror. These valuable assets help to maintain our status as the world's lone superpower, even as we transform our military to face the challenges of the future.

Soldiers are not just numbers or statistics. These are real Americans. True patriots. They have real families. When someone leaves home to fight for American interests abroad, it affects their entire community; it affects their friends and, most profoundly, it affects their families.

And so while we must remember the sacrifices of the brave men and women who fight on the battlefield, we must also be mindful of the sacrifices of those they leave behind—and so on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank them today, as well.

The difference our military is making in the world is undeniable. Just a short while ago, the idea that the Iraqi people could live free was a concept that many would not treat seriously. But the Iraqi people are forging ahead and have formed a unity government and are firmly embracing the opportunities that freedom provides.

I wish there were more balance in this discussion about Iraq. There are so many good things happening there—so many good things. And largely, unfortunately, they are left unreported.

Recently, Jack Kelly, former marine, Green Beret, and deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force during the Reagan administration, highlighted some of these important stories—for example, the account of marine Sgt Rafael Peralta, who has been posthumously recommended for the Medal of Honor.

I quote: "Sgt. Peralta was killed on Nov. 15, 2004, during the second battle of Fallujah. His squad was clearing a house. Sgt. Peralta was the first into a room where at least three insurgents lay in ambush. He was shot in the chest and the face, but still had the presence of mind to jump into an adjoining room to give the marines behind him a clear field of fire."

Four marines maneuvered into the room where Sgt. Peralta lay when an insurgent tossed a grenade into it. Sgt. Peralta pulled the grenade to him and smothered it with his body, saving the others from death or serious injury.

Sgt. Rafael Peralta died for a country he loved, but of which he was not yet a citizen. A Mexican immigrant who lived in San Diego, Sgt. Peralta

enlisted in the marines the day he received his green card.

"Be proud of being an American," Sgt. Peralta had written to his younger brother in the only letter he ever sent him.

While this is only one story, there are hundreds more that should be acknowledged.

In recent correspondence, Iraqi Freedom veteran Major Mark McDaniel of the 301st Fighter Wing in Fort Worth wrote these words: "Our efforts there in providing security enabled these courageous people to work through the sectarian issues that existed . . . I believe that this weekend has vindicated our presence and our sacrifices in Iraq. I, and the other members of the 301st Fighter Wing . . . believe in our mission there."

And we here at home believe in our men and women in uniform—in their courage and the cause of freedom they defend. We must always remember our Nation's heroes and live in a manner worthy of their sacrifice.

ASSISTING PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HUNGER AND POVERTY AROUND THE WORLD

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, 850 million people around the world go hungry every day. Famine and hunger destroy the lives of those who already suffer from extreme poverty, violence, and loss. Each instance is heart-breaking, but all too often we turn a blind eye to those in need. As a person of faith, and a board member of Bread for the World, I believe we can do more to help the most vulnerable throughout the world, and I want to draw the Senate's attention to a handful of countries devastated by poverty and hunger.

For over 40 years, Colombia has been engaged in an armed conflict between insurgent guerrilla groups and the Colombian military. This violence, exacerbated by decades of political instability and illegal drug trafficking, has subjected thousands of innocent civilians to human rights abuses. Since taking office in 2002, President Alvaro Uribe Velez has made strides in boosting the Colombian economy and stabilizing the political process. However, crime and widespread violence continue to undermine these efforts.

Colombia has the third largest internally displaced population in the world. Between 2 to 3 million people, out of a total population of 43 million, have been forced from their homes. On average, 350,000 people become internally displaced each year. Many flee to escape kidnappings, assassination attempts, and local violence linked to drug trafficking and the civil conflict.

Colombia's displaced population is in a dire state of need. Eighty percent of internally displaced people live in extreme poverty and lack access to sufficient food. In fact, Colombian insurgents have increasingly employed roadblocks and isolation tactics to stop

food shipments from reaching vulnerable locations. All too often, internally displaced persons are forced to eat fewer meals, each of which consists of low nutritional value. The average daily caloric intake of an internally displaced person is 1,752 calories—well below the recommended minimum of 2,100 calories.

Another country ravaged by poverty and hunger is Haiti. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 80 percent of the population living in poverty. In 2004, political unrest, coupled with social and economic instability and natural disasters, crippled a nation already in a state of extreme food insecurity.

The poor are particularly susceptible to chronic malnourishment. Almost half of Haiti's 8.3 million citizens are undernourished. Even more troubling, due to chronic malnourishment nearly half the children under the age of five suffer from moderate to severe stunted growth. Haiti, along with Afghanistan and Somalia, experience the worst daily caloric deficit per person in the world. The average Haitian consumes only 460 kilocalories each day.

The United Nations World Food Program provides food assistance to 600,000 Haitian people. While humanitarian relief programs like the World Food Program are a step in the right direction in eradicating hunger in Haiti, a number of factors are impeding efforts. Looting, poor road conditions, and a lack of security continue to hinder the delivery of food aid in the country.

Africa has long battled systemic poverty, violence, and hunger. The Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, has been engulfed in political turmoil for over 8 years, resulting in the death of nearly 4 million people. While the DRC is moving toward reunification and increased political stability, parts of the country remain highly volatile. Widespread violence, particularly in the eastern part of the country, has resulted in the internal displacement of more than 3.4 million people.

Civil conflict has also wreaked havoc on the country's agriculture industry. In some areas, there is a lack of secure farmland, and severe labor shortages and constant looting by combatants contribute to the crisis. Oftentimes, raiders slaughter livestock, causing scarcity of meat. In addition, efforts to increase the food supply have been thwarted by a widespread lack of basic education, job opportunities, and weak local implementing partners.

We cannot continue to ignore the current situation in the DRC while nearly 1,000 people die each day from war-related hunger and disease. Seventy-one percent of the Congolese population is undernourished and the mortality rate has climbed to more than 50 percent due to starvation.

In addition to the crisis in the DRC, Ethiopia is on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe. Ethiopia has the poorest human development indicators in the world. More than three-quarters

of Ethiopians live on less than \$1 per day, and almost half the population is undernourished. Drought has plagued Ethiopia for decades, leaving the country stripped of the natural resources required to feed its citizens. During the past 20 years, five major droughts have destroyed crops and livestock, and have left many people with few personal belongings.

Ethiopia is of strategic importance to the United States, and its stability is crucial to the Horn of Africa and our efforts in the global war on terrorism. Ethiopia shares borders with nations plagued by civil war and government instability, which impede famine relief efforts. In response to the famine in Ethiopia, USAID is transitioning its emergency response famine program to be more proactive. Revamping this program will help stimulate economic growth in the country. The hope is to permanently reduce famine-related poverty and hunger by increasing the government's capacity to respond effectively to these crises. In addition, famine relief efforts will be assisted by nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and local communities and households.

Finally, years of internal armed conflict and political instability have caused severe food shortages in Sudan. Southern Sudan, ravaged by civil war, may face the return of millions of internally displaced people following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005. A quarter of the Sudanese population is undernourished, and an estimated 3 million people will be in need of food assistance as they return to their homes.

In western Sudan, the violence in the Darfur region has culminated in the first genocide of this century. In February 2003, fighting erupted between rebel groups and government backed militias. The United Nations estimates that more than 70,000 people have been killed in this conflict, while other organizations believe the actual number is three to four times higher. As a result of ongoing ethnic violence, approximately 2 million people have been internally displaced, and 220,000 refugees have fled to neighboring Chad.

Famine remains a distinct possibility, with need far outweighing the ability of government and nongovernment agencies to deliver food aid. Prior to the crisis in Darfur, an estimated 18 percent of Sudanese suffered from natural malnutrition. Today, 3.5 million people in Darfur are hungry, with numbers expected to skyrocket until the conflict is resolved. Relief efforts have slowed considerably due to widespread violence. Furthermore, refugees and internally displaced people are not expected to return to their homes for the next planting season. As the rainy season approaches, flooding will likely hamper our ability to adequately distribute food aid. Finally, the World Food Program recently announced that it must reduce daily rations in Darfur and eastern Sudan to as little as 1,050

kilocalories, or 50 percent of the daily minimum requirement, due to funding shortfalls.

I briefly described the food shortage crises facing five impoverished and vulnerable countries. This is a snapshot of the reality millions face each day—including those who live in the United States. Each statistic represents a person struggling to survive, not knowing where their next meal will come from—if it will come at all. In many situations, people remain poor and powerless with virtually no hope of breaking the cycle of despair. We can no longer use ignorance as an excuse for our inaction.

Without question, assisting fellow human beings in need is a moral issue. However, in many of these war-torn and troubled nations it is also an issue of national security. Countries that are politically unstable and ravaged by hunger and disease are often breeding grounds for terror and violence. After all, it wasn't long ago that Osama bin Laden based his operations in Sudan in order to export terrorism and attack innocent civilians.

As our world becomes increasingly interconnected, poverty abroad cannot be ignored. Political instability and infectious disease know no border and can affect us at home. Sadly, too often instances of extreme hunger and famine do not invoke action among the world's most powerful nations until it is too late—leaving millions dead or forever suffering from the consequences of chronic malnutrition. Our inaction is not because we don't care, but I do believe the United States should be more proactive, and not reactive, in ending hunger and poverty.

The Federal budget is a reflection of our Nation's values and priorities. The Bush administration has made clear its priorities by extending tax cuts to the fabulously wealthy, while deeply cutting funds for hunger prevention and poverty programs. Less than half of 1 percent of our budget goes to fighting poverty, hunger, and disease. The United States is the most powerful and wealthy nation in the world. We should be a leader in ending hunger and poverty, and we can begin by standing up for those at home and abroad who are in dire need of assistance.

DARFUR PEACE AGREEMENT AND SUDAN

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, for nearly 3 years, the Government of Sudan has conducted genocide in Darfur. The United Nations, the African Union, the U.S. State Department, and many other organizations possess detailed descriptions of these crimes against humanity. This enormous body of evidence demonstrates unequivocally that the Government of Sudan and its jingawiet proxies have attacked, uprooted, raped, starved, enslaved, and killed millions of civilians.

In Congress, we have written letters, introduced and adopted legislation, and

spoken out strongly. We have supported the African Union peacekeepers, the international relief workers, and the people of Darfur. In March, I sent a letter to President Bush detailing 13 steps that should be taken to address the crises in Sudan. I reiterate the steps that are suggested. These include appointment of a Presidential Envoy to Sudan; rapid preparation and deployment of additional, well-equipped, robustly-mandated international peacekeepers to Darfur; urgent assistance to the African Union, including by NATO; and multilateral enforcement of existing U.N. resolutions that establish a no-fly zone over Darfur and hold accountable those who have committed crimes.

Thousands of Americans, including many New Yorkers, have taken a strong and personal interest in the crisis in Darfur. I have heard their voices and frustration. The situation on the ground is still dire. As we lament this crisis today, four million people in Darfur and eastern Chad now depend on relief organizations for survival—one million more than a year ago.

The alarm issued on May 19 by the United Nations Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, is therefore especially distressing. Despite the hopeful signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement on May 5 by the Government of Sudan and one of the main Darfur rebel groups, the work of aid workers remains sharply constrained by violence, funding shortfalls, and restrictions being imposed by the Government of Sudan. Civilians continue to be attacked and sexually-brutalized by Sudanese armed forces, the jingawiet, and rebel groups. On May 19, Mr. Egeland warned, "We can turn the corner towards reconciliation and reconstruction, or see an even worse collapse of our efforts to provide protection and relief to millions of people." In eastern Chad, Mr. Egeland said, "we are confronted with a very dangerous vacuum that is being filled by rebels, militia and others, leaving civilians, internally displaced persons, refugee camps and relief workers utterly exposed."

In the context of Sudan's history, this post-peace agreement reality is not unique. Nor is it surprising. The genocide in Darfur, in the west, began just as the Government of Sudan concluded a horrific, 20-year campaign of violence in the south—a campaign that laid waste to the institutions and infrastructure of southern Sudan. That conflict was brought to an end more than 1 year ago through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)—but conditions in southern Sudan remain grim. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick said recently that the challenge in southern Sudan is not one of re-construction, but rather of basic construction; years of conflict have destroyed nearly everything.

Even so, the National Congress Party in Khartoum—the signatory to the CPA with the means and the mandate