

after increase for our Nation's veterans. More importantly, the Republican-led Congress made it a priority to pass the VA appropriations bill so that our veterans could continue to receive the care that they deserve.

That, Madam Speaker, cannot be said of this year's VA funding bill. Reports in today's Congressional Quarterly are that the majority is considering holding the vital VA bill hostage as a means of passing a giant omnibus bill to fund government operations. The health and welfare of our veterans is more important to my constituents than it is to score cheap political points here in Washington, D.C.

Madam Speaker, I hope that you can find it in your heart to appoint conferees to the VA-Military Construction appropriations bill and send the President a bill that he can sign. Our veterans deserve nothing less.

MARINES NOT WELCOME HERE

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, Oakland Airport officials might as well put a sign: "Welcome to Oakland, but no U.S. military allowed here."

It seems that over 200 marines from the combat fields of Iraq flew into Oakland, California, and were not allowed to deplane into the airport. They were forced off the plane between two runways and had to sit in the grass for 3 hours while waiting to fly to Hawaii. The troops had flown from Iraq via Kuwait, Germany, and JFK Airport. They had already been completely screened by Customs and TSA at JFK, but the officials at Oakland Airport wouldn't let them into the terminal.

One marine said no explanation was ever given. Interestingly enough, reports say this not the first time Oakland banned the U.S. military from its airport.

Most airports welcome our returning troops with patriotism, cheers, flags and enthusiastic applause. But not in Oakland. They should be ashamed. They should apologize to each marine, and Congress needs to find out why the marines were treated so poorly and even consider prohibiting Federal funds from going to this airport if it is shown that the airport is antimilitary.

And that's just the way it is.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CLARKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, the American people have been opposed to the occupation of Iraq and they have been demanding the redeployment of our troops for a very long time now, but the word obviously hasn't reached our Nation's leaders.

Last Wednesday, the Secretary of Defense asked Congress to appropriate billions of dollars more to continue the occupation of Iraq. He said that American troops will remain in Iraq for years to come with no end in sight.

The occupation has already cost nearly half a trillion dollars, and what have we gotten for that investment? Even General Petraeus couldn't say for sure that our involvement in Iraq has made us any safer when he testified before Congress last month. And the National Intelligence Estimate warned us in July that al Qaeda is using the occupation to energize extremists, raise money, and to recruit and indoctrinate operatives for attacks on the U.S. homeland.

Madam Speaker, the way to make America truly safer is to end the occupation, restore our moral leadership in the world, and use diplomacy to strengthen the structure and institutions of international cooperation and peace. That's why it is time to tell our leaders in the White House that Congress isn't going to be their friendly neighborhood ATM machine any more. Congress has the power of the purse. We can use it to force the administration to change course. We must refuse to appropriate one more dime for the occupation. Instead, we must fully fund the safe, orderly and responsible redeployment of American troops and military contractors out of Iraq.

Redeployment of our troops is the necessary first step on the road to peace. It is clear that Iraq will never stabilize while American troops and the vast unaccountable army of 180,000 American military contractors are there.

Our occupation of Iraq prevents Iraqis from finding solutions to their own problems, and it delays the regional and international diplomatic efforts needed to jump-start a true peace process.

The administration has said that it plans to redeploy some troops, but this is just a tactic, I believe, to win political favor. The arithmetic proves it. We began this year with 130,000 troops in Iraq. The escalation brought the level to 160,000. Now the administration says it will bring out 30,000 troops so by next summer we will again have 130,000 troops.

So, Madam Speaker, we end up with the same number of troops, but the administration calls it a reduction. I call it fuzzy math. President Bush has created a national mathematics panel to study ways to improve math education in America. That is a really good thing, because the President himself needs help with addition and subtraction.

Actually, Madam Speaker, the only way to make sure that our troops are out of harm's way is to proceed right now with a full redeployment and end the fantasy that there is a military solution to this quagmire.

If we fail to use our power of the purse, if we continue to spend our taxpayer dollars on this occupation instead of ending it, we will have failed politically, we will have failed economically, and we will have failed morally. And we will have failed our brave troops along with all of the American people. It is time to bring our troops home.

GOLD STAR MOTHERS

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, yesterday, under the bright sun and blue sky of the Texas Sunday afternoon, American flags flew in the silent breeze over thousands of quiet marble uniform tombstones in the Houston National Cemetery. This is where Texans bury their war dead, men and women who go off to war for America.

In the center of the immaculately kept cemetery, a tribute of sacrifice was being made to the living: Those mothers who lost their children in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mothers of Texas who gave their children that died in their youth so the rest of us could live in safety were honored on this Gold Star Mothers' Day.

I was present along with Congressman GENE GREEN and Congressman NICK LAMPSON and Congressman KEVIN BRADY to honor these special ladies. We, like those present, were emotionally affected.

Gold Star Moms are what we call them, is a mother who lost a child in combat. This concept started in World War II when Grace Seibold learned on Christmas Eve 1918 that her aviator son was killed in aerial combat in France. Grace Seibold directed her grief and sorrow to helping wounded doughboys in local D.C. hospitals. She formed the Gold Star Mothers to give support for other such moms.

During World War I, if a son had gone off to war in the War to End All Wars, as it was called, a banner was hung in front of the home in the window for each son in the military. This banner had a blue star in the center of it. If the son was killed, a gold star was superimposed over the blue one.

During World War II, my Grandmother Poe hung such a banner with a blue star in the front window of her home in the country. My dad went off to war when he was just 18. When my grandmother died, it was one of the few items she had saved. That banner never had to have a gold star placed on it because my dad returned safely.

Madam Speaker, here is a banner of a Gold Star Mother. It has the name of the soldier that was killed, William

Amundson, Jr. He was killed in Afghanistan. He was from Woodlands, Texas. He was a corporal in the United States Army.

The blue star banners are very similar to this except in the middle there is a blue star rather than a gold star. And when that son or daughter is killed in combat, the gold star is superimposed over the blue one. These banners have been carried throughout all of America's wars since World War I and applies to sons and daughters killed in war.

So yesterday these mothers of the fallen were there. And standing guard around them were the Patriot Guard motorcycle members, rugged Vietnam veterans who escort the fallen to this cemetery for burial. There was a 21-gun salute. Then after all of the speeches, these women were given yellow roses from Texas and the buglers played Taps for the fallen.

Madam Speaker, as a father of four, I can think of nothing worse than to lose one of my own kids. No parent wants their son or daughter killed in unknown foreign lands. No parent wants their child to predecease them, and no parent wants their child to die in their youth. But it happens, and the grief can only be understood by other such parents.

As Congressman GREEN said yesterday, "Even the greatest heart surgeon in the world, Dr. Michael DeBakey, cannot repair such a broken heart of a mother like this."

Mothers are special, especially the mothers of those who wear the American uniform. Those who keep statistics on the last words of soldiers say more often than not that the dying words of many soldiers in combat is, "Mother, mother."

It seems to me the strongest bond in all of creation is the bond between a mother and her child. The good Lord made it that way on purpose, and when that bond is broken by the loss of a child, that wound just never heals.

Madam Speaker, one out of every nine people in the military is from the State of Texas, and about 400 Texans, 10 percent of the total killed of 4,000, have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet sons and daughters throughout America continue to join our military knowing that they will no doubt go into the desert of the sun and the valley of the gun, and they leave behind their parents, their mothers.

So as we show honor and respect to America's children who serve, let us show American compassion and ultimate gratitude for the mothers of those troops who display the Gold Star sacrifice from their windows. And the next time we pass a house with one of these gold stars, one of these 4,000 throughout the United States, and they are being displayed in the window, maybe we should stop and say a prayer and say "thank you" because of that special mother who gave that child for the rest of us.

And that's just the way it is.

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.)

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

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

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

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

COMMUNISM DOESN'T WORK

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I want to comment right now on a little article that was in the paper. Probably most Americans didn't see it today. But I followed what went on in Zimbabwe a long time ago when the communist leader, Mr. Mugabe, took over. He said they were going to make that country greater because of the movement towards communism.

Well, here is what happened since he took office: The government says that it is going to have to import 100 tons of extra wheat but that is still going to be really short of the 375,000 tons that they need to feed their people. And the United Nations World Food Programme estimates that at least 3 million people will need emergency food aid in Zimbabwe before the April corn harvest.

Communism simply doesn't work. It hasn't worked in the past. It didn't work in the Soviet Union, and it hasn't worked in Zimbabwe or other places. And we ought to be very thankful that we live in a democratic republic in this country. And we ought to do everything we can to help those living under the yoke of communism and do everything to can to make them free.

I think it is extremely important because when you go to those countries, as I have, and you see what those people have to live like and you see the starvation, little children with big bellies because they don't have the food they need, you realize that the communist menace is very, very costly anyplace it occurs in the whole world.

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PERU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HARE. Madam Speaker, I rise this evening in strong opposition to the pending Peru Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA promised Americans 200,000 new NAFTA jobs, higher wages and an increasing U.S. trade surplus with Mexico, just to name a few. Now, nearly 15 years later, the evidence shows that NAFTA has failed to make good on its promises.

In fact, in many areas in which benefits were promised, conditions are worse than before NAFTA went into effect. For example, in direct contradiction to the promises of NAFTA, nearly 1 million jobs were destroyed directly by the NAFTA free trade deal.

My district, in particular, has suffered the loss of 1,600 jobs; and NAFTA forced Maytag to leave Galesburg, Illinois, for Sonora, Mexico. And just last week, it was announced that Carrhart Manufacturing, a clothing company, will cease production and move to Mexico at the end of December.

Every aspect of the city of Galesburg is hurting. The economy, the schools, the small businesses that feed into these plants, and the citizens have lost their spirit. Now Galesburg is trying to rebuild its identity, but I fear that the Peru FTA promises more of the same.

The proposed Peru FTA would replicate, and in some instances expand, on many of the most devastating provisions of the flawed NAFTA-CAFTA model. First, the Peru FTA preserves many of the CAFTA terms providing extreme foreign investor rights. The provisions in the Peru FTA allow foreign investors to skirt U.S. courts and laws and give foreign investors the authority to sue the United States Government in foreign tribunals for violating their FTA-granted rights.

Second, the Peru Free Trade Agreement includes the NAFTA-CAFTA procurement chapters on Buy America and anti-offshoring policies. The FTA requires foreign firms be treated the same as American firms seeking government contracts, challenging our right to invest tax dollars into American jobs and businesses.

Several groups have publicly opposed the Peru FTA for those very reasons, including the two largest trade unions in Peru.

The September 17 Change to Win Coalition letter states: "Chapters of the Bush-negotiated FTA that literally replicate job-killing aspects of the core NAFTA-CAFTA model have not been addressed. Not one word was changed from the Bush-negotiated text."

In addition, the Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment released a statement saying: "Based on our experience with NAFTA and CAFTA, the U.S.-Peru FTA will cause lost livelihoods in rural communities, reduce access to life-saving medication and perpetuate the global 'race to the bottom' for workers and environmental protection."

But to make matters worse, no one seems to have faith in this President to