

to support them in whatever way may be required and to make sure that our troops have everything they need to do their job and to come home safely and soon.

To those who have been wounded, our Nation has promised to care for you as you have protected us. This is a solemn promise, and it will be honored.

The debt which can never be repaid is to those whose lives have been lost in the war, and as a Nation we mourn them. Their absence is felt each day, each and every one of them; but on this day in particular, their sacrifice should be remembered in a special way. I therefore salute our colleague, Congressman PATRICK MURPHY, for leading us in a moment of silence in memory of his colleagues who were lost in the war and all others as well.

Mr. Speaker, 4 years ago today, our Nation launched a war of choice in Iraq. The war has claimed the lives of over 3,200 American troops and wounded tens of thousands more, some of them permanently.

Any U.S. military engagement has to be judged in three ways: does it make our country safer, our military stronger, and the region in which we are engaged in the conflict more stable. The war in Iraq has failed on all three counts.

In fact, the administration's policy in Iraq has diminished the safety of our country by reducing the strength of our military. The readiness has sunk now to levels lower than Vietnam, it has failed to hold the Iraqis accountable for the future of their own country, and it has dishonored our commitment to our veterans. It has cost billions of dollars and significantly damaged our reputation in the eyes of the world.

When our young men and women are placed in danger, we owe it to them to provide them with the best training and equipment possible and a strategy worthy of their sacrifice.

The generals have told us over and over again, across the board, generals on active duty, General Petraeus as recently as last week, and many retired generals: there is no military solution to the war in Iraq. It cannot be won solely militarily. Instead, we must leverage all of our political, economic, and diplomatic strengths.

Again and again Senator REID, the Democratic leader in the Senate, and I have urged President Bush to adopt a plan for Iraq that contains the following elements:

Change the mission. Transition the mission from combat to training. That will enable us to responsibly redeploy our troops.

Third, we must build consensus for political accommodation in Iraq. They must amend the constitution to be more inclusive to end the civil strife.

Fourth, we must encourage a robust diplomatic effort, primarily involving Iraq's neighbors. The first meeting of neighbors was held. That is a good step. It was at a low level, appro-

priately, and now it has to move to the ministerial level.

We then must reform and reinvigorate the reconstruction effort. \$10 billion is unaccounted for. \$10 billion in thin air of the reconstruction effort is unaccounted for. How do we answer to the American taxpayer, when this war is costing \$2 billion a week on the military side, and on the reconstruction side we can't account for the money?

When we do this, when we transition, when we change the mission, redeploy the troops, build political consensus, engage in diplomatic efforts and reform and reinvigorate the reconstruction effort, then we can turn our attention to the real war on terror, in Afghanistan.

I hear the voice of the future in the Chamber. What a beautiful sound. What a beautiful sound.

Later this week, Mr. Speaker, we will debate a plan to bring the war to an end. The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act will rebuild our military, protect our troops, provide for our veterans and hold the Iraqi Government accountable.

The benchmarks for the Iraqi Government set forth in this bill are the benchmarks endorsed by President Bush on January 10. They are: improvement in the performance of the Iraqi security forces; a greater commitment by the Iraqi Government to national reconciliation; and reductions in the level of sectarian violence in Iraq.

After 4 years of war, it is reasonable to expect these benchmarks to be met this year. Four years. We are in this war longer than World War II. There is no end in sight. There is no end in sight. There is an unlimited commitment, with no strategy to match the sacrifice of our troops.

Democrats will be offering later in the week, and hopefully with Republican support, we will pass a supplemental that will, that will, place a time frame. And I am really pleased that so many retired generals have come out in support of a time certain that relates to the performance that the President himself established, that the Iraqi Government themselves agreed to.

This isn't anything we created. It is the President's benchmarks. The Iraqis agreed to it. We want to see progress. But if we don't, we will begin the redeployment of our troops out of Iraq in 6 months from that date. Then we will leave troops there for training, for protecting our diplomats, for fighting terrorism, for force protection, but only for those purposes.

I welcome the debate over this bill and the opportunity it provides for Members of Congress to express themselves in what I consider is the greatest ethical challenge to our country, how we send our young men and women into battle; how we send them without the training, without the equipment, without the rest time at home, and overextend them when they are there.

□ 1930

How we send them into battle without plans to honor our commitment to them.

In the military they say: On the battlefield, we will leave no soldier behind. We say: And when they come home, we will leave no veteran behind.

Apparently our country, our great country, has to make a decision for greatness on how we are viewed in the world, on how we project our power and our ideals to make the world a more peaceful place, to honor our commitment to our troops, to honor our commitment to the future, and to honor the sacrifice and the vision of our Founding Fathers.

This is a very important decision for our caucus, for our Congress, for our country, and I hope that the debate will be in the spirit as it was a few weeks ago. It was a great commitment to our troops with knowledge of substance, based on values and respecting the patriotism of each and every person who serves in the Congress.

I know for certain as Speaker of the House that every single person who serves here is patriotic and wants to honor our veterans. I know for certain because I have seen every single person here take an oath of office to protect and defend our Constitution and our country. It is in that spirit that we offer this supplemental that makes America safer, that strengthens our military, and brings stability to the world.

OIG PROTESTS ITS INNOCENCE TOO MUCH

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, today 6 months after meeting with Members of Congress and with the staff of OIG of Homeland Security about Ramos and Compean, Richard Skinner of the Office of the Inspector General is now saying his staff did not lie to Members of Congress, but his staff was just mistaken about certain facts when it briefed us.

He also is saying the meeting was confidential. I am sure the OIG staff wishes it had been since the staff misled Congress on what occurred at the border.

Is Skinner saying it is okay to mislead Congress in a confidential meeting? Sounds like it to me. The meeting was only confidential in the fantasy world of OIG. And how would Skinner know; he wasn't even there.

His staff not only told Congress inaccurate things about the case, they said they have the documents to prove their assertions. Even after repeatedly asking for such documents, they were never produced. Why? Because they don't exist.

Now that the transcript of the trial is completed, we find out about the inaccurate statements of OIG to Congress.

OIG would do well to simply tell the truth and get accurate information in public and private rather than use slick Madison Avenue press releases to justify their misstatements to Congress.

And that's just the way it is.

BRING OUR TROOPS HOME WITH DIGNITY

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, some semblance of security in Baghdad, but chlorine bombs in Anbar province and other parts of Iraq, the fourth-year anniversary of this country's offensive on the nation state of Iraq.

It is interesting that as we continue to watch our young people fall in battle, heroes that they are, and veterans come home, that the executive in this body, this Congress, this House and the other body cannot come to grips with a forward path for solving and reconciling the war in Iraq.

It is interesting that our Commander in Chief desires to tell us that we must stay the course, a refrain that we have heard over and over again.

My plea would be let us sit down at the table of reconciliation. Let us not suggest that people who stand for conscience are unpatriotic, and let us resolve to bring our troops home together in dignity and with success.

HONORING REV. RAYMOND MOSS

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recall the exceptional life of Reverend Raymond Moss of Marietta, Georgia. Reverend Moss passed away this month at the age of 79, leaving behind a long legacy as an advocate of social justice and civil rights.

Reverend Moss was a fixture in Cobb County. After a brief stint in Minor League Baseball and a job as draftsman at Lockheed Martin, Moss found his true calling, and in 1959 he started Back to the Bible Holiness Church, the first homegrown Black church in Cobb County.

He went on to build 14 more churches in Georgia and Alabama, and helped lead the Cobb community during the turbulent civil rights era.

Reverend Moss was a compassionate father not only to his own 14 children, but to any member of the Marietta community in need of a mentor.

In fact, I first came to know the Reverend 30 years ago while practicing medicine with one of his dear friends, Dr. Douglas Glover. Indeed, many of Reverend Moss' faithful came to my office for care, and all had been deeply touched by the Reverend's compassion.

I know these members of our community will carry on his dedication to compassionate service.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in honoring the life of Reverend Raymond Moss.

APPLAUDING TENNESSEE BASKETBALL

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, as a Tennessean, I am proud of the success of my three schools that have reached the Sweet Sixteen.

In America, there is nothing going on with greater import on the local scene than March Madness; and there is no place more happy about the madness than the State of Tennessee, the Volunteer State.

Three of our schools have teams in the Sweet Sixteen: Our land grant university, the University of Tennessee; and my two alma maters, Vanderbilt University and the University of Memphis.

On Thursday, the University of Tennessee and the University of Memphis will both be playing in the Sweet Sixteen in San Antonio, Texas. Everybody in Texas knows if it weren't for Tennessee, there wouldn't be a Texas. So we bring basketball to Texas, and we brought liberty and independence to Texas. We have a lot of pride in our basketball teams and our universities.

SUPPORTING COLEMAN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to commend the men and women serving in the Federal Correction Complex in Coleman, Florida, in my district. This Federal complex serves our Nation by housing prisoners in low-, medium- and high-security facilities. It has provided countless jobs in my district and helped our growing economy.

The people who fill those jobs truly are a testament to the array of wonderful people in my district. Even with the struggles in funding and thinly stretched staff, the officers at Coleman are cheerful, positive, and professional people. Staffing a prison complex is no easy job, and many of the officers there literally have scars to prove it. Yet they know their job is to keep our families safe.

I have had the opportunity to tour this facility several times and meet with the staff, and I am proud to serve alongside such honorable public servants. I want to take this opportunity to give them all my heartfelt thanks.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRALEY of Iowa). 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.

HEARING REQUESTED ON RAMOS AND COMPEAN PROSECUTION

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. Mr. Speaker, today I had the pleasure of meeting with Congressman JOHN CONYERS, chairman of the Judiciary Committee. I shared with him information from myself and other Members of Congress who are requesting a hearing on the case of Border Patrol Agents Ramos and Compean.

Many of us in Congress are concerned about the Federal prosecutor in this case and his decision to bring criminal charges against these agents. Agents Ramos and Compean were convicted last spring for shooting a Mexican drug smuggler who brought 743 pounds of marijuana across our border into Texas.

These agents never should have been sent to prison, yet today is their 62nd day behind bars. There are legitimate legal questions about how this prosecution was initiated, and how the U.S. Attorney's Office proceeded in this case. Members of Congress and the American people want to know why the Federal prosecutor is on the wrong side in this case.

To prosecute the agents, the U.S. Attorney's Office granted immunity to a known drug smuggler. He is not an American citizen, he is a criminal. Drug enforcement reports have confirmed that the Mexican drug smuggler brought a second load of marijuana, 752 pounds, into the United States after he was granted immunity to testify against our border agents, but this information was kept from the jury and the public.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain that Chairman CONYERS will review the information that I and other Members of Congress have brought to his attention concerning the prosecution of these two heroes.

Before closing, I ask the President to use his authority and pardon these two Hispanic Americans who were doing their job to protect the American people; and, more importantly, I call on the President to listen to the American people and to the thousands of citizens who have asked for a pardon for these two men.

IRAQ IN CIVIL WAR

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

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise with deep concern that on this very day 4 years ago, our Nation inaugurated a conflict, an unnecessary war, a war of choice, not a necessity.