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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. MALONEY of New York).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 20, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CAROLYN B. MALONEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

IRAN'S MANIPULATION IN IRAQ

Mr. STEARNS. Members of the House, Senate and the media should obviously be aware that Iran, a neighbor that shares decades of vibrant history with Iraq, is heavily involved in shaping the future of Iraq through illegal activities.

The president of the Strategic Policy Consulting company here in Washington, DC; Mr. Jafarzadeh, recently stated, "Al-Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards is stepping up terrorism and encouraging sec-

tarian violence in Iraq." Now this is a man to listen to when it comes to Iran. He is the Iranian dissident who first revealed the existence of the clandestine nuclear sites in Iran in August 2002. He says that Iran's goal is to create insecurity to compel coalition forces to leave in order to establish an Islamic theocracy in Iraq.

Iranian forces have been heavily involved in sending arms, ammunition, IED materials, training militia and sending its own intelligence agents into Iraq since 2003. My colleagues, it is a sad twist of irony; Al-Quds now coordinates insurgent attacks on our forces in Iraq from the national headquarters in Iran out of the old U.S. Embassy building, the same building where American diplomats were held for those horrific 444 days that began in the year 1979.

One of five Iranians arrested by U.S. forces in a raid on Iran's consulate in a city in northern Iraq on January 11 was an envoy of the former Iranian President. The man, Mr. Sharoudi, is wanted in Austria on charges that he took part in the assassination of an Iranian Kurdish leader and his aids in Vienna in 1989. This historic leader of Iranian Kurds was killed in an apartment in the outskirts of Vienna when he was scheduled to meet a delegation from Iran. According to the Austrian police, the killer escaped arrest by hiding in Iran's embassy in Vienna. Austrian sources claim that the Iranian president, Ahmadinejad, was the logistics head of the commando groups responsible for the Kurdish leader's death, and Sharoudi was one of the killers. It is curious, then, that this same man was recently found operating with four other Iranians in northern Iraq.

There is also an Al-Quds force in Iraq under the command of Mehdi Mohandes. According to a recent Washington Times article, it was Mohandes who was responsible for the attacks on the U.S. and the U.K. embassies in Ku-

wait in the eighties. Interpol placed Mohandes on a wanted list in 1984, and since then Mohandes has remained inside Iran's borders—until now. The new terror network which he commands in Iraq is curiously named Hezbollah, a deliberate linkage to Lebanon's own terror movement with which Mohandes has connections. The Iraqi network operates in Basra and Baghdad. Members are trained in military and terror tactics in Basra, and they receive armed shipments there that were smuggled across the border from Iran.

To maintain this network, obviously it is expensive, has a huge cost. According to the Washington Times article again, Brigadier General Abtahi of the Iranian Revolutionary Forces in southern Iran send millions and millions of dollars from a small border town in Iran into Iraq every month. My colleagues, we have little hope of success in Iraq if we neglect to address this growing interference by Iran.

In related news, the Iraqi President has changed his stance and has publicly pledged to fight terror and insurgent groups within Iraq, whether they are Sunni or whether they are Shi'a, which includes the Sadr militia. In turn, this has motivated Sadr forces to end the boycott from the Iraqi government, a move towards greater participation in the political process there. My colleagues, it is a hopeful sign that perhaps with greater political participation, the popular support of the terrorists in the Shia community will decline.

We must maintain this diplomatic and military pressure against these terrorist groups and on the Iraqi government to fight them. There is no hope of success in Iraq as long as Iran is allowed free reign to interfere and despoil the Iraqi government's efforts.

I support the President's acknowledgement of this growing threat and urge him and my colleagues in Congress to work together to provide the

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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material support to our service men and women on the ground they need to combat it.

NATION'S LOOMING FINANCIAL CRISIS NEEDS A BIPARTISAN SOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, as a nation, we are moving closer and closer to the edge of the financial cliff. A few steps forward and we will start the free fall into a canyon of debt which is bad for our country.

The baby boomers start retiring at the end of this year, and that will bring unprecedented levels of entitlement and other program spending. If left unchanged, in just a few decades there will be little money left for transportation, education, health care, medical research, cancer research, veterans, the environment, and all the other important programs. We cannot continue to keep borrowing and mortgaging our future to countries like China that carry our debt.

Young people should be clamoring for Congress to act; they have the most to lose from our inaction. It is their future that is being mortgaged, and every day we don't act we increase the debt burden they must repay in the future.

I have a bill which offers an opportunity to change the current course. Senator VOINOVICH and I first introduced the SAFE Commission last summer, and we reintroduced it in January.

Our country is in trouble, and we cannot afford to wait much longer. The bipartisan SAFE Commission will put everything on the table, entitlements and other Federal spending and tax policies, as it comes up with recommendations. It will hold town hall meetings across the country to explain the financial crisis we face and discuss the issue with the American people. I believe the American people, given the hard facts from a bipartisan panel, will understand that solving this problem will take some sacrifice from everyone.

The commission's recommendations would then come to Congress and we would take an up or down vote on the proposals in their entirety, similar to the BRAC process. Mandating congressional action on the panel's recommendations is what makes this unique.

There is also an opportunity for Congress to put forward an alternative proposal to reach the same goals at the same time the SAFE Commission recommendations are voted on. Holding out some hope that Congress would act on its own, the legislation also has a provision that if Congress were to pass a measure making substantive changes in entitlement spending and taking other action to get our financial house

in order, the commission would cease to exist. But if Congress doesn't act no later than 17 months from the organization of the commission, it would be required to vote up or down on the SAFE Commission.

I have written a number of Dear Colleagues and personally talked with a number of my House colleagues about joining this effort. While 20 Republicans have signed on, including minority leader JOHN BOEHNER, this effort has fallen on deaf ears on the other side of the aisle. I have personally sent a letter to each Blue Dog Coalition member appealing to them to step forward and join me in focusing national attention on this critical crisis. I have a history of working in a bipartisan way in this panel, and yet I hear absolutely no support or interest from the other side of the aisle.

I have also written to media and public opinions and leaders about this issue over the year. I certainly understand how the issue is competing with other national priorities, including the war in Iraq, but I fear that if we can't get Congress to move this year, there will not be another opportunity for a couple of years, with the 2008 presidential campaign heating up. This is a moral issue that this Congress is not addressing.

As a father of five children and a grandfather of 12, the fiscal challenges facing the Nation with the baby boomers retiring strike me as much more than a routine policy discussion. Without action, what kind of future are we leaving to our children and our grandchildren? In a word, "bleak." We owe a debt to previous generations, to our parents and our grandparents for the sacrifices that they made for our country to make our country so great. Likewise, our generation, those who serve in this Congress and serve in the administration, must find the resolve so that generations to come will have the same type of financial future that our parents and grandparents gave to us.

I ask Members of Congress to look at this and join in a bipartisan way to deal with this issue in this Congress. And I also urge the administration, which has been silent on this issue, to stop, to break the silence. And for Rob Portman and the Secretary of Treasury and others to come up here and support this so we can make sure that we give our children and our grandchildren the same opportunities that our mothers and fathers gave to us.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 43 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, full of goodness and wisdom, guide this government, business executives and all Your people in their daily decisions, especially those which have to do with money.

Lord, before You does money have any meaning? Certainly money can never be the measure of a person's true worth. Before You, money cannot even be an index of a generous heart. Why, then, is money so important to Your people? And how will they be judged by You? Does money itself dull human perceptions and put an end to dependency on others? Are You not the Almighty? Then why do people think they can solve their problems themselves only with more money?

As people pray, do they imagine You can help them only by giving them money? Do they believe You do not care how or why they spend money? If water is the sign of life, and a crust of bread or a bowl of rice can symbolize human hunger, what is the meaning of money? Does money really talk? In the United States the dollar bill says "In God we trust." So be it now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays. The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.