

opinion, if we were to bring in more American troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq? And they all said no."

But the decider wasn't listening. The reason is because we want the Iraqis to do more. It is easy for the Iraqis to rely on us to do this work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future.

The President didn't like what he had heard, the decider being an adherer to the military chain of command, so General Abizaid is being shown the door. As a Lebanese American who is fluent in Arabic, I think his understanding of the region far exceeds that of any of the advisers that the President may be depending upon to make this misguided proposal to escalate the war.

General Casey has also been removed as commander of U.S. forces in Iraq. It started with General Shinseki, who told the President he would need 500,000 troops to occupy the country and avoid the abyss into which we have fallen, a civil war, insurrection, insurgency. He also was fired because the decider didn't believe his advice.

It is time to change course in Iraq.

And the President is not only continuing a failed policy and sending more U.S. troops to a mission that is very unlikely to succeed, according to the advice of his uninformed commanders, who he is ignoring, he is also going to undermine the effort in Afghanistan.

Things are going bad in Afghanistan. Remember, that is where Osama bin Laden planned 9/11. That is where the Taliban supported and harbored al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. We, with NATO and the world behind us, decided to take them out. Remember that? Osama bin Laden, dead or alive; dead or alive. You don't hear that from the White House much anymore.

But Osama bin Laden is still planning attacks on the United States, and the one-eyed Omar is coming back to Kandahar. They are planning a spring offensive. They didn't withdraw this winter. The NATO forces are ineffectual. And what is the President's response? He is going to withdraw U.S. troops from that region.

So we have the heart of darkness, Afghanistan, and the President is ignoring that problem to continue his failed policies in Iraq. No escalation of the war in Iraq by the adherer-decider, President Bush.

SUPPORT THE SAFE ACT

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

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, unfortunately, violence has struck our schools again. Unfortunately, this has been an increasing trend. In the past several

years, we have seen countless incidents across the Nation.

School violence is not limited to urban areas. Acts of bullying and other violent crimes occur in schools across the Nation on a daily basis. We must do something to stop this growing trend.

Our current reporting system on school violence is severely flawed. Under current law, school violence stats are collected through surveys and self-reported data. This data is not the most current data available and does not provide an accurate view of the situation.

The FBI has developed a system of reporting that is both comprehensive and up to date. This system is referred to as the NI-BERS System. It collects the data, details of crime incidents, and is a much greater tool to prevent school violence. Accurate data is valuable to addressing this issue. It allows our school administrators to see the true impact of school safety programs and it provides the basis for need-based school funding.

In response to these issues, I have introduced the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act. My bill, referred to as the SAFE Act, moves reporting data from surveys to real crime stats in the NI-BERS System. This move will allow schools to accurately address school safety issues.

It will also ensure that funding is allotted to the schools that need it the most. Our schools do not have the resources that they need to combat school violence. President Bush has constantly cut funding for the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program. These cuts have left our already-overburdened schools without the money needed to stop school violence.

The SAFE Act will restore funding for our schools through a need-based grant program. Schools that do not have a safe climate will receive grants from the Department of Education. That money will be used to update school safety programs to curb the needless acts of violence and make our schools safer for our children. If we are serious about school safety, we must not only implement new reporting measures but must fully fund our schools.

The SAFE Act is endorsed by the National Parent and Teachers Association, the American Federation of Teachers and the National School Safety and Security Services.

Congress has sat and watched as schools across the country have attempted to deal with school violence with insufficient data and little to no funding. We tried to correct this in Leave No Child Behind. So as we reauthorize Leave No Child Behind this year, I am hoping we will be able to implement a better program. We have an opportunity to change the way we handle school violence in this country and truly make our schools safe.

We see and hear every day about the violence, when our children are in

school and do not feel safe, and I have talked to so many teenagers and middle school students that say that many times they do not feel safe in school. We can do something, but we need a better way of reporting it.

□ 1745

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

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

SECURITY FOR AMERICANS AT HOME AND ABROAD

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, yesterday, the House passed H.R. 1, a bill instituting the 9/11 Commission's recommendations. I am proud that the Speaker made this her first priority. It was an important first step. It was a step to strengthen America's security.

Another step we can take to provide security to Americans at home and abroad is to bring our troops home from Iraq. It is what I have been saying for several years now. In fact, this is my 176th 5-minute special order on Iraq. And it is what the American people demanded on November 7.

From the very beginning, our presence and continued occupation has brought strong opposition and violence to Iraq. The Vice President promised we would be greeted as liberators, that the troops would be hailed with cheers and flowers. Instead, the sad thing is our troops are being greeted with snipers, with rocket-propelled grenades and with roadside bombs.

Tonight, the President will announce an escalation in the occupation. He wants to send over 20,000 more troops to Iraq. In fact, we have learned just today that those troops are already arriving in Baghdad. He wants to put over 20,000 more troops in harm's way. And for what?

Tonight, the President will not announce an exit plan. Tonight, the President will not talk about benchmarks. Tonight, what the President will do is support more of the same. This is just "stay the course." Let's call it what it is: an escalation.

A majority of Americans support bringing the troops home. In fact, a recent poll showed that a majority of men and women in uniform support an end to this occupation. And yet the President wants more troops and refuses to put forth a plan to end our military presence there.

Well, the American people and the Congress have waited long enough, Mr. Speaker, for the Commander in Chief to do his job. So, on Friday, the Progressive Caucus and the Out of Iraq Caucus will host a forum with former

Senator George McGovern and Dr. William Polk on one such plan. This is a unique opportunity for Members to discuss available options. I encourage my colleagues to join us at this forum on Friday, day after tomorrow, at 9:30 in the Cannon caucus room.

We know there is no quick solution to put Iraq and the region back together again. But until we start to seriously consider the plans out there, we are stuck with President Bush's escalation and status quo. And you know what? Because I respect the troops and I respect their families so very much, I refuse to "stay the course."

So I tell the President: No, no to escalation. I tell the President: No, no to the status quo. And I say: Yes, yes to strengthening our Nation by protecting those who have already given so very much and bringing them home to their families.

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

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE IRISH PEACE PROCESS

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, first let me say how happy I am to see our Speaker, the gentleman from New Jersey, who I would mention to my colleagues was the Speaker of the General Assembly in the State of New Jersey, so he certainly knows what to do in the Speaker's chair. Great to see you up there this evening.

I come to the floor this evening to once again call on Dr. Ian Paisley and the Democratic Unionist Party to support peace and justice in Northern Ireland and not get in the way of creating a truly devolved government. I call on my colleagues to support the "New Beginning" policy envisioned in the Good Friday Agreement and the subsequent Patten Report, even as Northern Ireland tackles the controversial issue of setting up a fair and effective criminal justice system.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has called Sinn Fein's leadership under President Gerry Adams "remarkable," and I certainly agree. Despite a long history of unfair treatment and attacks by unionist paramilitaries and others, Sinn Fein is moving down the path to devolution by supporting the Police Service of Northern Ireland and working with the criminal justice system.

In order for the citizens of Northern Ireland to have a police force they can respect and cooperate with, they need to be assured that power sharing will be restored and officials will ensure

sufficient accountability to prevent the types of abuses that have plagued the Catholic community in the north for so long.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Northern Ireland and all of the political parties must be involved in the process to create a New Beginning to Policing. Since the Patten Commission Report in September 1999, much progress has been made in terms of increased recruiting of Catholic officers, establishment of district policing boards, and increased oversight and accountability of the police service. The St. Andrews Agreement, issued this past year, showed that the path to restoring critical political institutions should include support for and devolution of policing.

Sinn Fein has taken the bold step of moving forward to support the policing institutions, and now Dr. Paisley seems to want to stay in the past instead of recognizing that it is time to move forward with a police service and a government that respects and represents all the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Speaker, I again commend Gerry Adams, the leadership of Sinn Fein, Prime Minister Blair, and the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahearn, for all their hard work and courage in moving the peace process forward. It will not be easy to overcome the troubling history of discrimination and distrust between communities in Northern Ireland. I hope, however, that Dr. Paisley and the membership of the Democratic Unionist Party will put aside the politics of the past and become a partner in moving towards a just and lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

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

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

THE WAR IN IRAQ, LATINOS AND TROOP ESCALATION PLAN

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

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, good evening to you and to those families that are listening to us tonight.

I believe our Nation needs a policy to secure and stabilize Iraq, one that constructively engages in diplomacy and partners with neighboring countries and the region to create a stable and peaceful Nation in Iraq.

Unfortunately, President Bush missed the opportunity to set the United States on a new course in Iraq. Without a plan to secure the peace and stabilize Iraq, President Bush's plan will do nothing but unnecessarily risk the lives of more U.S. servicemen.

I have here displayed 13 of those service members who represent my district,

most of whom, if you can look through each, are under the age of 30 and who left families, parents and children. They went to serve our country with honor, no doubt, but many of them enlisted in the Reserve and the Guard hoping that they would come back to get a college education, to have a better life, to be able to get housing and to get health care for their families. Unfortunately, that dream is not true for many of them.

There are approximately, at this time, 132,000 U.S. troops serving in Iraq. This war, as you know, is having a significant impact on our families and our communities. Last December was the deadliest month of the war in over 2 years. U.S. casualties have exceeded well over 3,000 lives, and more than 22,700 servicemen and women have been permanently injured or disabled. Nearly half of those will not be able to lead a normal life.

While Latinos make up just about 12 percent of the U.S. population, they make up 17 percent of the service men and women in combat in Iraq, and about 11 percent of those have already been killed.

In the District that I represent in California, we have lost these young men. Sadly, Latinos, both citizens and noncitizens, and I mean those that carry green cards, are proudly there to serve our country, but we need to do more for them.

In 2001 to 2005 alone, the number of Latinos in the Army who enlisted rose by 26 percent. There are currently 35,136 green card soldiers proudly serving our country today. An additional 28,000 have become U.S. citizens since 9/11, and 73 have been granted citizenship after death.

This includes one of my very own, who was a fallen soldier early in the war, a young man, Lance Corporal Francisco Martinez, in the Marines, representing the City of Duarte in the San Gabriel Valley. His service to this Nation is countless. He was not even a U.S. citizen. He gave his life and was granted posthumous citizenship. But we need to do more for our soldiers than that.

The plan the President is going to speak to us of tonight ignores the real needs of our troops and the reality of the situation. Three times in the past 2 years President Bush has increased the number of troops in Iraq. Three times the approach has failed. From November 2004 to March 2005, the level of U.S. troops increased from 12,000 to 150,000. The increase did nothing to improve long-term security.

During the constitutional referendum in the fall of 2005, troop levels increased by 22,000 soldiers, for a total of more than a 160,000 American service men and women in Iraq. Again, this increase, while limiting major violence during the referendum, did nothing to improve the long-term security in that particular area.

During Operation Together Forward, the Bush administration sent additional troops to Baghdad. The U.S.