

me to relay to my colleagues this war is not lost. Let me be very clear. I sat in meetings with members of the Minnesota National Guard—by the way, I am unhappy about their tours of duty being extended. They and their families heard in the press that they were being extended. I complained about that to the Army and received an apology. In spite of that, they stood up and said to me: Use our names. Tell the Senate the war is not lost.

MAJ Brian Melton, from Moorhead, MN, said: Tell the Senate the war is not lost. Lieutenant Martin of the 1/34th Support Battalion in Talil, Iraq, wants the Senate to know the war is not lost. These soldiers talked about at one point it being kind of the Wild West in Anbar Province and it is being transformed.

I wish my colleagues would have heard the story from LTC Gregg Parks of Walker, MN. He told me about a suicide bomber who came into a town called Habbaniyah, and he veered into a crowd coming out of a mosque, blew himself up, and wounded or killed many Iraqis. Not a single American shed blood in that attack; yet our soldiers lined up to give blood. The next day, the mayor and local sheiks came in and gave the names of al-Qaida operatives and pledged to work side by side with our troops to drive al-Qaida out of Iraq. I wish my colleagues could have heard COL David Elicerio, commander of the 1/34 Brigade Combat Team of the Minnesota National Guard. He told me about the “adopt a highway” program his men and women have implemented with the local Iraqis. He said the local sheiks came in and identified where there were two IEDs.

There are many challenges that lie ahead, probably too many to name here. I don’t see the situation in Iraq through rose-colored glasses and I am not trying to paint an unrealistic picture. The violence we have seen over the past weeks in places like Baqubah reminds us all too well of the struggles we face.

I know the American public has run out of patience on this war. I don’t know what the next round of letters to the editor will look like, or the attack ads on moveon.org for the vote I cast; but I am committed to stemming the flow of terrorism, not handing al-Qaida a victory they will be able to use to strengthen their forces and hurt and kill more Americans.

This bill we passed, with the timeline for surrender, doesn’t make America safer. I am not for an open-ended commitment or a blank check, but as General Petraeus has said, you have to have a plan B. If the Iraqis don’t do what they need to do for reconciliation, we are going to figure out a way to get Americans out of the crosshairs of that civil war. Some say we will be in Kuwait or some other area. General Petraeus told me he has to refuel his helicopters three times to get back into Baghdad, and if there is a “Rwan-

da” in Baghdad, we are not going to be able to do anything about it. We will redeploy our troops if this surge doesn’t work, put them outside the center area.

In the end, they may have to look at a plan B. But that decision will come soon. General Petraeus said: Let me come back in September. Perhaps that is not soon enough for the American public, but the decision we made today, the statement that the war is “lost,” the decision to set into place a timetable for surrender, doesn’t help us provide an opportunity for reconciliation to occur in Iraq, or for there to be greater stability in the region, and it will let al-Qaida have a victory. A timetable for surrender hurts our warriors on the front line. It is a path I could not follow, one America shall not follow. Let us come back with a different supplemental and let us give our warriors the money they need to fight the war that has to be fought. Let us do that quickly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT JOSEPH M. TACKETT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Senate to pause for a moment today in loving memory and honor of Sgt. Joseph M. Tackett of Whitehouse, KY. Sergeant Tackett was tragically killed on June 23, 2005, in Baghdad while serving his country in the U.S. Army. He was 22 years old, and the recipient of numerous awards including the Bronze Star.

Not long after Sergeant Tackett’s death, his body returned home to Johnson County, KY, and family, neighbors and friends came to pay their respects at his flag-draped casket in the Johnson County Middle School gymnasium. Even the kindergarten students at his old elementary school to whom he wrote letters remembered him that day as a friend and a hero.

Joe “was just very excited and enthusiastic about protecting a country he loved,” says Nellie Bowen, Joe’s third-grade teacher. “He had a pride in our country that we sometimes miss.”

It was Ms. Bowen’s class of kindergartners that Sergeant Tackett wrote to, becoming their overseas pen pal even while serving in Iraq. He replied to every letter they sent him, and even came to the school to speak to the children after his first tour of duty.

Mr. President, when you know this about Sergeant Tackett, you can see why so many in Johnson County turned out to support the Tackett family after the loss of their brother and son.

That Sergeant Tackett excelled in the Army is no surprise. He embraced his duty to serve with the same vigor and passion he displayed for so many activities in his short but full life.

“He looked at everything with enthusiasm,” Joe’s mother, Kathy Tackett,

tells us. “He was so looking forward to the future, [and] he was always planning for the future.”

As a child, Joe turned this infectious enthusiasm to many activities, including music. He was the singer for a Christian band and also a budding entrepreneur.

High-profile musicians didn’t often include Whitehouse on their tours. But Joe filled the gap by producing rock concerts locally, showcasing local bands.

His love for music persisted to his time in Iraq. While there, he befriended Iraqi college students and introduced them to American rock music. Joe made friends so easily this way, he even exchanged emails with Iraqis while back home in Kentucky between tours.

Joe graduated from Johnson Central High School in 2000 and even then held dreams of one day becoming a soldier. He attended Big Sandy Community and Technical College, and then the terrorist attacks of 9/11 happened. Joe enlisted a month later.

He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery, 4th Brigade Combat Team of the Third Infantry Division based at Fort Stewart, GA. He saw the Army as a way to learn new things and gain new experiences, and he devoured each new experience with excitement.

Sent to Iraq and Afghanistan for his first tour of duty, Joe learned new skills and new proficiencies. He took online classes while serving in Iraq to get his college degree. He took any training that became available and was always open to opportunities for self-improvement.

“Joe wanted to travel . . . he was curious about other countries, other lands,” Kathy Tackett says. Joe called his mother once from the Middle East telling her he was standing in a mosque. “There’s not many people who have ever done this, Mom,” she remembers him saying with pride.

Sergeant Tackett was deployed a second time in January 2005. His assignment was to escort visiting dignitaries through the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad. Even while undertaking this important mission, he still found time to write e-mails to his family back home. “He was interested in so many things,” Kathy Tackett recalls. “I can’t imagine the person that he would have become, if he would’ve had more years.”

Sergeant Tackett’s families may never know the answer to that question. But I think we know Joe would have tackled anything he did with energy and with enthusiasm, as he did throughout his life.

Sergeant Tackett leaves behind a loving family. He is loved and remembered by his mother, Kathy, his father, Wendell, his brother, Sam, his sister, Michelle Spencer, his nieces Hailey Tackett and Shawna Spencer, and other beloved family members.

Mr. President, no words we can say today will ease the pain of the Tackett

family. I know they are still searching for answers. But I hope the reverence and respect this Senate shows Sergeant Tackett will remind them that he lived and served as a hero, and his country will forever honor and remember his sacrifice.

I ask my colleagues to keep the family of SGT Joseph M. Tackett in their thoughts and prayers. I know they will be in mine.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

1ST LIEUTENANT SHAUN M. BLUE

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude that I honor the life of a brave young man from Munster. Shaun Blue, 25 years old, died on April 16 while deployed in Al Anbar Province on Operation Iraqi Freedom. With his entire life before him, Shaun risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

Shaun was a lifelong Hoosier, graduating among the top 10 students of his class from Munster High School in 2000. He joined the military because, as his high school principal said, "He was one of those kids who did things everyone else was afraid to do." His valor over the course of his service in Iraq exemplifies Hoosier values and courage. His track and field coach at Munster High described Shaun as a mentally tough kid saying, "The fact that he chose the career path that he did didn't surprise me. It was perfectly suited for him."

Shaun was killed by an improvised explosive device while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, based in Twenty-nine Palms, CA.

Today, I join Shaun's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Shaun, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.

Shaun was known for his dedication to his community and his love of country. Today and always, Shaun will be remembered by family members, friends, and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero, and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Shaun's sacrifice, I am reminded of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fallen soldiers in Gettysburg:

We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am certain that the impact of Shaun's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Shaun M. Blue in the official RECORD of the Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy, and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that families like Shaun's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Shaun.

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS DAVID NEIL SIMMONS

Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude that I honor the life of a brave young man from Kokomo. Neil Simmons, 20 years old, was killed on April 8th while deployed in Baghdad, when his convoy encountered an improvised explosive device and insurgent fire. He had been in Iraq for less than 2 weeks. With his entire life before him, Neil risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

Neil attended Kokomo's Northwestern High School and followed the example set by his father and uncle by enlisting in the Army a few months before graduating in 2005. He enjoyed the structure of the military and felt a sense of duty to serve his community and country. His father described Neil as "an avid outdoorsman who was happy and always had plenty of friends."

Neil was killed while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, in Fort Benning, GA. Neil's father reflected on his son's death, asking, "What's the odds of, among 160,000 troops your only child is there 1 week and gets killed?" Private First Class Simmons leaves behind his father, David, and uncle, Jim Simmons.

Today, I join Neil's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Neil, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.

Neil was known for his dedication to his family and his love of country. Today and always, Neil will be remembered by family members, friends, and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero, and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Neil's sacrifice, I am re-

minded of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fallen soldiers in Gettysburg:

We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am certain that the impact of Neil's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of David Neil Simmons in the official RECORD of the United States Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy, and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope families like Neil's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Neil.

SPECIALIST JASON J. BEADELS

Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude that I honor the life of a brave young man from La Porte. Jason Beadles, 22 years old, died on April 11th while deployed in Baghdad on Operation Iraqi Freedom. With his entire life before him, Jason risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

Jason has been a lifelong Hoosier, graduating from La Porte High School in 2003. He had been interested in technical engineering throughout high school, earning his welding certificate from A.K. Smith Career Center before graduating. Army Specialist Beadles enlisted in the Army as an engineer after the attacks of 9/11. His valor over the course of his service in Iraq exemplifies Hoosier values and courage. He decided to enlist because as his welding instructor put it, "he was always concerned about other people." Jason enjoyed the military, and he believed that throughout all the hardships they faced he and his company were helping the Iraqi people.

Jason died while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was a member of the 887th Engineer Company, 326th Engineer Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), in Fort Campbell, KY.

Today, I join Jason's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Jason, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.