

REAUTHORIZE THE NATIONAL POISON CONTROL INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Mr. TOWNS. Yesterday, I introduced legislation with LEE TERRY from Nebraska to provide for the reauthorization of the Poison Control Center. Since being codified into law in 2000, the Poison Control Centers must undergo reauthorization every 3 years. These centers provide immediate value to the public, providing free medical facilities that are staffed by toxicologists, nurses, and other professionals.

Each year, poisoning results in 285,000 hospitalizations, 1,200 days of acute hospital care, and 1,300 fatalities. H.R. 5669 will reauthorize these critical Poison Control Centers to keep our national public health infrastructure in tact. I would like to thank Congressman TERRY for this support.

The 24-hour emergency and information hotline services that are provided for this legislation are given by the National Poison Center Toll-Free Telephone number. By providing direct patient care services to residential callers, health care professionals and institutions, Poison Control Centers save lives and help avoid costly hospitalizations. Let us keep that in mind as we move forward and reauthorize the Poison Control Centers.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COHEN). 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.

□ 1615

AMERICAN DEATH TOLL IN IRAQ

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, when the American death toll in Iraq hit 4,000 on March 23, there was a great deal of coverage about it in the media. But the media only seems to care about the death toll when it reaches a special milestone. But now that the number of dead has reached 4,012, they have packed up their cameras, they have gone back to ignoring Iraq. Once again, our brave soldiers are dying in virtual anonymity, surely paying the highest price.

Here at home, the administration's occupation policies are harming American people in other ways. I am talking about the millions of Americans who are suffering because we are spending our Nation's treasure in Iraq rather than on vitally-needed social and economic programs here at home. We're spending about \$4,600 every second on

the occupation, or about \$12 billion a month.

Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize winning economist, has calculated that the occupation will ultimately cost \$3 trillion, and that, Mr. Speaker, is a conservative estimate. And it will certainly cost a whole lot more if the administration gets its way and we establish permanent bases in Iraq or the others get their way and we remain involved in Iraq for 50 to 100 years.

This enormous drain on our resources has buried us so deeply in debt that we cannot make investments in the programs that would really move our Nation forward. Just think of what we could do with all of those trillions of dollars.

We could invest in the education of the 48 million children in our public schools. We could prepare them to compete and win in the global economy.

We could invest in early childhood education and the childcare that millions of poor and middle-class families so desperately need.

We could invest in the medical research needed to cure disease and to save millions of Americans from needless suffering and from premature death.

We could invest in our infrastructure and new green technologies which could produce millions of jobs around our Nation.

We could produce an economic stimulus package to fulfill remaining unmet needs.

We could help States and cities to provide their first responders with the equipment they need to save lives in the event of terrorism or natural disasters.

We could build more affordable housing and assist those who have been caught up in the mortgage meltdown.

We could provide health care to our citizens, starting with SCHIP for our children.

We could move to ensure the solvency of Social Security.

We could invest in global health. As a member of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, I can tell you that every single dollar spent on global health is a dollar spent to make our world more peaceful and stable.

These are just a few examples, Mr. Speaker. We couldn't do them all, but if we did just a few, we would go much further toward safeguarding our national security than we are currently doing in Iraq.

I hope my colleagues will remember this when General Petraeus arrives next week with his bar charts and statistics. Let us remember that the turmoil in the Middle East is helping to spike gas prices at the pump. It is leading us deeper and deeper into the effects of the Iraq recession.

The responsible redeployment of our troops out of Iraq is the one policy that makes sense, and the one policy that the great majority of the American

people support. It is high time for us to do what the American people expect us to do, and they expect us to end our occupation of Iraq.

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 Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF IRAQ ON THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF AMERICA IS NEEDED

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

Mr. SESTAK. Shortly, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will come before the House and the Senate to provide an update on the military and the political situation in Iraq. That is my grave concern, that once again we will have placed a man who is responsible for the security, the military security only, of Iraq, in the position, in the singular position, of determining the national security policy of the United States and the public's perception of it, when what is needed, what is direly needed, is a comprehensive assessment of the national security of America and the impact of the strategy we have in Iraq upon it. So in fact it is the questions that General Petraeus cannot or should not answer that are the most important ones.

For example, the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be asked directly, what is the impact of Iraq upon the military's readiness to deploy and meet the required timelines of its various war plans, when in fact today it cannot deploy its forces, its army, in order to protect the 28,000 men and women who wear the cloth of our Nation in South Korea from an attack on the timelines required by North Korea against the South?

And while before Iraq we actually trained on multiple areas of warfare, for the past 3 years your army has only been training in counterinsurgency. The Joint Chiefs of Staff must address the impact of 3 years of its army training only in one warfare area and being unable to meet any timeline of any war plan by its army in America's arsenal of war plans.

Then, in the long term, the impact of 42 percent of our men and women who we are recruiting today being less capable than ever of being able to operate

and maintain the systems of our weaponry in the future as they can in the past 3 years.

Second, it is not the general or the ambassador who should come here to speak about Iraq's security, but rather our intelligence agencies that must address the question about whether the Iraq strategy has improved our overall efforts in the global war on terror, with Afghanistan once again prey to terrorists, and the Taliban having gone back into the ungoverned regions to protect them, and General Hayden, head of the CIA, having said that al Qaeda now has a safe haven in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. What is the impact of a strategy in that unstable region that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has described as "in Iraq what we do what we must, but in Afghanistan, we do what we can."

Officials from the State Department likewise must address the impact upon our allies of this war in Iraq and our relationships with them and the efforts to achieve other diplomatic goals, remembering that when we went into Bosnia, 50 percent of the coalition troops were non-U.S., and when we went into Iraq 5 years ago, less than 7 percent of the troops that entered that country were non-U.S.

And then the Treasury, how can they explain the impact of what all economists agree are now almost \$2 trillion to \$3 trillion as the cost of this war in Iraq? When Iraq is awash in oil revenues, why are we using taxpayers' dollars?

Therefore, the questions that General Petraeus can and should not answer comes down to, he should not be the one to tell us how long and at what cost before we change our strategy. It is only if Congress changes the forum for this general to come before us to say and hold up a national mirror, this is the impact of Iraq upon our overall national security strategy, and if it is not working and if it is negatively impacting it, we must therefore change the strategy.

I believe it is against the spirit, as a man who has served in the military 31 years until I entered Congress, to have a military man placed in the position to determine singularly, when he is only responsible for the security of Iraq, to then determine without everyone else there the right strategy and course for America's national security.

We must have that debate. Is the strategy working? Is it harming our overall national security? If it is, change the strategy.

PRESIDENT BUSH INSULTS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WITH HIS SELECTIVE PARDONS AND COMMUTATIONS

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

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, on March 25, President Bush pardoned 15

people and granted one commutation to crimes that ranged from falsifying records, conspiracy, bank embezzlement, dealing in firearms, distributing marijuana, conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud, heroin importation, selling migratory bird parts in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, aiding and abetting the escape of a prisoner, distributing more than 50 grams of crack cocaine, and a variety of other crimes.

This brings to about 157 the number of pardons and/or commutations that President Bush has distributed in his administration in his term in office. And although that number is fewer than other presidents, it in fact is reflective of something that I consider to be a serious problem, and that is this, that although the President has been compassionate or for whatever reason chosen to commute or pardon 157 people up to this point in time, he leaves two Border Patrol agents in jail today because I believe of the misbehavior of the U.S. Attorney in that particular district. And this is unconscionable.

This House actually voted last session unanimously to in fact deny funding to the Department of Justice to continue to hold Border Patrol agents Ramos and Compean in the Federal prison where they have been incarcerated now for well over a year. And their terms are for 11 and 12 years. This is because they have been sentenced because of the testimony of a known drug smuggler by the name of Osvaldo Aldrete-Davila, who was given immunity from prosecution by U.S. Attorney Sutton.

The SUV that Aldrete was driving was found to contain 743 pounds of marijuana. The jury in the Ramos-Compean trial was never told of Aldrete's criminal background. They were led to believe that Aldrete was a one-time smuggler trying to make money to help a sick relative. In fact, he was a professional drug smuggler, and his history was known to the DEA and to Johnny Sutton, who was the prosecuting attorney, at the time of the trial, but this history was kept from the jury.

It has been revealed in documents since the trial that U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton deliberately delayed the arrest of Aldrete for a subsequent drug smuggling incident that occurred while Aldrete was under the grant of immunity but before the trial date. All of this information, of course, was withheld because it would have revealed Aldrete as a professional smuggler, not an innocent victim of the Border Patrol agents. This is a flagrant abuse of prosecutorial discretion.

These mistakes were compounded by asking for a mandatory 10-year sentence for Ramos and Compean for the use of a firearm in the commission of a "crime." The law was never intended to apply to law officers who use their weapons in the performance of their jobs.

The key question at the trial was whether the drug smuggler Aldrete had

a weapon and had pointed it at one of the Border Patrol agents. Mr. Aldrete denied having such a weapon. It was his word against the testimony of the Border Patrol agents, so the credibility of each witness was critical to the jury's evaluation of the incident, yet the jury was kept in the dark about Aldrete's other arrests and his history as a drug smuggler.

The mistakes made by Ramos and Compean in trying to apprehend Mr. Aldrete should have been handled as a violation of agency rules, the failure to write and file a report of an incident involving Aldrete, and punished by a 5-day suspension, not by criminal prosecution. For that reason alone, this conduct rises to the level of reprehensible, the conduct I believe of the U.S. Attorney in this case and of the President of the United States.

To compound the injustice in this case, it is widely known that the U.S. Attorney is a friend of the President, going back to his days as Governor. But Bush's refusal to issue a pardon or a commutation amounts to a coverup I believe of this misconduct in this trial.

Ramos and Compean have appealed their conviction to the U.S. Circuit Court and a decision on that appeal is due shortly. At the very least they deserve a new trial. President Bush has it within his power to end this injustice now by issuing a pardon or a commutation. I sincerely hope that he takes that responsibility seriously and offers this to Mr. Ramos and Mr. Compean, who are languishing in prison for literally no good reason.

COMMEMORATING THE LEGACY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., BY SERVICE FOR PEACE

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

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the 40th anniversary of the week Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed to commemorate his legacy as continued by Service for Peace.

During his short life, Dr. King marched in my hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, on his way to touching millions of American lives throughout this Nation and inspiring the masses with his message of freedom and of peace. Today, I am proud to say that, in no small part thanks to the efforts of Reverend Peter Hayes, our local Service for Peace, and programs like 40 Days of Peace, the MLK Season of Service, and the King Memorial Walk and Peace Fest, the spirit of Dr. King is alive and well in our hometown.

Each year, Service for Peace reminds us that though King was taken from us far too early, the gifts he gave to us, his lessons, his passion, his legacy, remain and continue to inspire within us a deep sense of justice.

Nationwide, half a million volunteers took part in this year's MLK Day of