

While women may not make up the majority of our Armed Forces, they stand and work side by side with the men, and they are critical to our mission. As we celebrate Memorial Day, it is fitting that we take this moment to celebrate their service.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, as a cosponsor of H. Res. 1054, to recognize the service and achievements of the women in the Armed Forces and the nation's women veterans. I thank my San Diego colleague, Congresswoman SUSAN DAVIS, for introducing this important resolution.

These women have been the unsung heroes of every war since the Revolutionary War. So, as we approach Memorial Day, it is fitting that we sing their praises. They are playing an increasingly prominent and important role in our nation's military forces. 350,000 are now serving, making up 15 percent of active duty personnel, 15 percent of Reserves, and 17 percent of the National Guard. More than 185,000 have been deployed since 2001.

Women veterans are second only to elderly veterans as the fastest growing segment of the veteran population. 255,000 women use VA health services today. There are 1.7 million women veterans, 7 percent of the total veteran population—expected to be 10 percent by 2020.

As Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I want to report that Congress has responded to the challenge of meeting the needs of women veterans. Today, there exist within the Department of Veterans Affairs, two main offices specifically focused on addressing the needs of women veterans, put into place by Congress.

The 102nd Congress passed landmark legislation (P.L. 102-484) which authorized VA to provide gender-specific health care at VA medical facilities. The position of Director of Women's Health was also created by this law. This position has recently been elevated to the Chief Consultant on Women Veterans' Health, Strategic Health Care Group, reporting to the Undersecretary for Health (of the Veterans Health Administration). At each medical center, a Women Veterans Program Manager is ready to assist women veterans with their health care.

More recently, Congress passed P.L. 108-422 to extend VA's authority to offer Military Sexual Trauma Counseling and Treatment to active duty service members.

In addition, The Center for Women Veterans was established by the 103rd Congress in P.L. 103-446 to oversee the Department's programs for women veterans. The Center Director reports to and is an advisor to the VA Secretary on matters related to policies, legislation, programs, issues and initiatives affecting women veterans. To name a few of its activities:

Perform outreach to minority women veterans, homeless women veterans with children, elderly women veterans, and women veterans living in rural areas.

Monitor transition assistance program (TAP) briefings to ensure that the gender-specific information about benefits and services is provided to women service members.

Monitor VA Office of Research and Development to ensure that VA research includes the issues of women veterans.

Their goal is to identify any programs that are unresponsive or insensitive to women veterans and to address their deficiencies. The center is concerned with Department-wide legislative policies, within the VHA and VBA (Veterans Benefits Administration) and NCA (National Cemetery Administration), as well as the State offices.

The center is holding the 4th National Summit on Women Veterans' Issues on June 20-22 in Washington, DC.

H.R. 4107, the Women's Veterans Health Care Improvements Act, has been introduced by my colleague serving on the VA Committee, STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN. This is one of a number of ways that we are currently working on behalf of women veterans.

The House VA Committee continues to provide oversight to ensure that the laws we have passed are doing the job and that women veterans are receiving the information, benefits and care they deserve.

In the light of these actions by Congress, it is my hope that all women veterans will receive the care and benefits they have earned through their service and accomplishments that we recognize here today.

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it's a joy to celebrate the women of our armed services. At this time, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1054, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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COMMENDING THE ALASKA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 961) commending the Alaska Army National Guard for its service to the State of Alaska and the citizens of the United States.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 961

Whereas the 297th Infantry and the scout group of the Alaska Army National Guard deployment of almost 600 Alaskans was the largest deployment of the Alaska National Guard since World War II;

Whereas the Alaskans of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry came from 80 different communities across Alaska;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry included 75 soldiers from New York, Mississippi, Illinois, Georgia and Puerto Rico;

Whereas the 586 soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry were mobilized in July

of 2006 and deployed to Camp Shelby, Mississippi;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry was deployed to Camp Virginia, Camp Navstar and Camp Buehring in Northern Kuwait;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry courageously performed route and perimeter security missions, mounted combat patrols and inspections and searches of vehicles going into Iraq from Kuwait, among other assignments;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry, over the course of 12 months in Kuwait and Iraq, inspected and searched over 30,000 semi-trucks;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry designed all force protection plans in northern Kuwait;

Whereas the families of the members of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry have provided unwavering support while waiting patiently for their loved ones to return;

Whereas the employers of members and family members of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry have displayed patriotism over profit, by keeping positions saved for the returning soldiers and supporting the families during the difficult days of this long deployment, and these employers are great corporate citizens through their support of members of the Armed Forces and their family members;

Whereas the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry has performed admirably and courageously; gaining the gratitude and respect of Alaskans and all Americans; and

Whereas members of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry received 3 Bronze Stars, 12 Meritorious Service Medals, 142 Army commendations and more than 200 Army Achievement Medals for their outstanding service: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That Congress—

(1) commends the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry of the Alaska Army National Guard upon its completion of deployment and brave service to the Commonwealth of Alaska and the citizens of the United States; and

(2) directs the Clerk of the House of Representatives to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard for appropriate display.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of House Resolution 961, commending the Alaska Army National Guard for its service to the State of Alaska and the citizens of the United States.

Let me first take a moment to thank Representative DON YOUNG of Alaska for taking the lead and getting this resolution to the floor here today.

The 297th Infantry and the scout group of the Alaska Army National Guard's deployment of almost 600 Alaskans was the largest deployment of the Alaska National Guard since World War II.

The deployment of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry included servicemembers from 80 different communities across Alaska, and included 75 soldiers from New York, Mississippi, Illinois, Georgia and Puerto Rico.

The term "citizen soldier" is a term that rings true for these patriots that have stepped forward to serve our great country.

Five hundred eighty-six servicemembers of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry were mobilized in July of 2006 and deployed to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. The 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry was deployed to Camp Virginia, Camp Navstar, and Camp Buehring in northern Kuwait where they courageously performed route and perimeter security missions, mounted combat patrols and inspections and searches of vehicles going into Iraq from Kuwait.

Over the course of 12 months in Kuwait and Iraq, they inspected and searched over 30,000 semi-trucks and designed all force protection plans in northern Kuwait.

We would like to thank the families of these servicemembers who have provided unwavering support while waiting for their loved ones to return. It is through the support of our families that our servicemembers are able to serve our great Nation, especially during times of war.

In addition, when members of the National Guard deploy, their families are not the only ones affected. Since our servicemembers live and work in their communities, the communities, too, are affected by these deployments, especially their employers. We would like to recognize and thank those employers who have displayed patriotism over profit by keeping positions saved for the returning soldiers and supporting the soldier's families during this time. Our soldiers and their families could not have made it through these difficult times without that support.

The courageousness and dedication to duty of the members of the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry is evident in the awards and decorations received during their deployment, which included three Bronze Stars, 12 Meritorious Service Medals, 142 Army commendations, and more than 200 Army Achievement Medals for their outstanding service.

As a Nation, we thank you for your service to the Commonwealth of Alaska and the citizens of the United States upon completion of this deployment.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 961, which commends

the Alaska Army National Guard for its service to the State of Alaska and the citizens of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to pay tribute to the 586 courageous members of the Alaska Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry who recently returned from their year-long deployment in southern Iraq and Kuwait. These brave men and women, representing 80 different communities across Alaska, successfully served as security forces in northern Kuwait and southern Iraq, guarding camps and convoys heading into Iraq since October, 2006.

Alaska's sons and daughters were joined by National Guardsmen from New York, Mississippi, Illinois, Georgia and Puerto Rico as they inspected and searched over 30,000 semi-trucks during their 12 months in Kuwait and Iraq.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, all the members of this outstanding unit returned home safely, but not before distinguishing themselves by earning three Bronze Stars, 12 Meritorious Service Awards, 142 Army commendations, and more than 200 Army Achievement Medals for their outstanding service.

Mr. Speaker, not since World War II has the Alaska National Guard had so many of its members deployed. I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not also pay tribute today to the incredible families of these brave soldiers who waited at home while their loved ones answered our Nation's call. The families of 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry also serve, and they deserve our sincerest appreciation and thanks.

Alaska and the entire Nation owe the members of the Alaska Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry a debt of gratitude. We are all so proud of their service. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge all Members to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) such time as he might need.

(Mr. YOUNG of Alaska asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

First let me thank the chairman of the subcommittee, Mrs. DAVIS, for her fine work in bringing this legislation, and of course, Mr. WITTMAN, for your fine work. As a freshman, I deeply appreciate it. Congratulations on doing an effort for our National Guardsmen for Alaska.

Much has been said today, and I will not repeat that, about the Alaska National Guard, the 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry, that went to Kuwait and Iraq and what they were able to do.

I would just like to mention one thing. The majority of these young people came from many areas of the State of Alaska, about 80 communities in the State of Alaska. If you think about it a moment, going to Iraq, more so even Kuwait, and the change in temperature, that was a marvelous thing

to witness when some of those people came back and told me it was not only hot, but also it was cold, which they're somewhat used to. But they went over without any complaints and returned, by the way, in body, all 586 members, back to Alaska. I have to say, this is what we call the "citizens' army," the families they left behind, the families that welcomed them home.

We have to recognize the importance of the Alaska National Guard and the National Guard of the Nation and the role they play, a role much larger than ever expected to play by being deployed time and time again. I hope we do address that issue in the near future.

I also like to suggest that they did the work over in Iraq and Kuwait by receiving three Bronze Stars, 12 Meritorious Service Medals, 142 Army commendations, and 200 Army Achievement Medals. So they did their job as they were over there.

I had the privilege of going to Camp Shelby in Mississippi when they got off the ship and came back to the United States soil and to speak to them there. As I told them then, I not only support the troops, I respect the troops and the jobs they did. They were charged as civilian soldiers to go overseas. They were charged to do a duty and they did it with great valor, and that I deeply respect them for.

I think this body must recognize the importance of the National Guard, not only in Alaska, but across this Nation, and continue to support the families and individuals themselves as they serve this great Nation.

This is a good piece of legislation in recognition of a great unit. I again thank the chairman and the subcommittee chairman and the ranking member. I do thank all of you, my colleagues, for supporting this resolution and supporting not only the Alaska National Guard, but the National Guard in total.

I rise today to honor the Alaska Army National Guard and the 586 members of the Alaska Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry who returned in October from their year long deployment to southern Iraq and Kuwait, in the largest deployment of the Alaska National Guard since World War II.

The 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry was deployed from October 2006 to October 2007 and spent the year as security forces in northern Kuwait and southern Iraq since October 2006, successfully guarding camps and convoys heading into Iraq.

The guardsmen came from all over my State, with members of the unit hailing from 80 different communities across Alaska, including Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kodiak, Soldotna, Kenai, Nome and many Native villages. Thankfully, all 586 who deployed overseas were able to return safely to those communities.

Many of these Alaskans had never ventured Outside prior to mobilizing, and the climate in the Middle East could not be more different from that of Alaska, but not one hesitated to serve their country, even if it meant facing temperatures of 130 degrees.

They served with distinction as well, inspecting and searching over 30,000 semi-trucks and designing all of the force protection plans for northern Kuwait. They were recognized for their service, earning 3 Bronze Stars, 12 Meritorious Service Medals, 142 Army commendations and more than 200 Army Achievement Medals over the course of their deployment.

I was honored to be invited to their welcome home celebration at Camp Shelby in Mississippi this past October. I was humbled to spend time with them and, as I told the National Guardsmen at Camp Shelby, "You can't support the troops unless you respect them. I humbly respect you because you have done your job as you were charged to do so, and as volunteers. You left your families and you went forth and accomplished what you were taught to do."

I truly believe that the importance of the National Guard to our country cannot be overstated, which is why it is important that we honor these citizen-soldiers. We must not, however, forget the families of these citizen-soldiers, who make their own sacrifice for our country and earn nothing but the thanks of the Republic.

And so I respectfully urge the House to pass this resolution, to thank those citizen-soldiers from Alaska and to thank their families. It is the greatness of these citizens from which America derives its own and we would all do well to remember that.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that cosponsored this resolution.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 961.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HONORING MEMBERS OF AIR FORCE KILLED IN THE KHOBAR TOWERS TERRORIST BOMBING

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 32) honoring the members of the United States Air Force who were killed in the June 25, 1996, terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers United States military housing compound near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 32

Whereas June 25, 2008, marks the 12th anniversary of the terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers United States military housing compound in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on June 25, 1996;

Whereas 19 members of the United States Air Force were killed, more than 500 other Americans were injured, and 297 innocent Saudi or Bangladeshi citizens were killed or injured in the terrorist attack;

Whereas the 19 airmen killed while serving their country were Captain Christopher J. Adams, Staff Sergeant Daniel B. Cafourek, Sergeant Millard D. Campbell, Senior Airman Earl F. Cartrette, Jr., Technical Sergeant Patrick P. Fennig, Captain Leland T. Haun, Master Sergeant Michael G. Heiser, Staff Sergeant Kevin J. Johnson, Staff Sergeant Ronald L. King, Master Sergeant Kendall K. Kitson, Jr., Airman First Class Christopher B. Lester, Airman First Class Brent E. Marthaler, Airman First Class Brian W. McVeigh, Airman First Class Peter J. Morgera, Technical Sergeant Thanh V. Nguyen, Airman First Class Joseph E. Rimkus, Senior Airman Jeremy A. Taylor, Airman First Class Justin R. Wood, and Airman First Class Joshua E. Woody;

Whereas the families of these brave airmen still mourn their loss;

Whereas three months after that terrorist bombing, on September 24, 1996, the House of Representatives agreed to House Concurrent Resolution 200 of the 104th Congress, honoring the victims of that terrorist bombing;

Whereas on the fifth anniversary of that terrorist bombing, on June 25, 2001, the House of Representatives agreed to House Concurrent Resolution 161 of the 107th Congress, which was concurred in by the Senate on July 12, 2002, further honoring the victims of that bombing;

Whereas on June 27, 2005, the House of Representatives agreed to House Concurrent Resolution 188 of the 109th Congress, further honoring the victims of that terrorist bombing;

Whereas those guilty of carrying out the attack have yet to be brought to justice; and Whereas terrorism remains a constant and ever-present threat around the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That, on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers United States military housing compound in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, Congress—

(1) recognizes the service and sacrifice of the 19 members of the United States Air Force who died in that attack;

(2) calls upon every American to pause and pay tribute to those brave airmen;

(3) extends its continued sympathies to the families of those who died; and

(4) assures the members of the Armed Forces serving anywhere in the world that their well-being and interests will at all times be given the highest priority.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I stand before you and my colleagues today in support of House Concurrent Resolution 32, honoring members of the United States Air Force who were wounded and killed in the June 25, 1996 terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

The June blast took the lives of 19 airmen from Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, and destroyed the entire front of Dhahran's Khobar Towers housing compound. More than 500 U.S. Air Force troops were wounded, and 297 Middle Eastern citizens were killed or injured as a result of the bombing. Five thousand pounds of plastic explosives disguised in a water tanker truck claimed the lives of servicemembers whose families were left grieving the loss of their loved ones.

Life, our most treasured asset, is too often taken unexpectedly. It was the sworn duty of our airmen to protect and serve this country by all means, and in our commitment to them and others who have given their lives in defense of our great Nation, we honor their selfless sacrifice and take a moment to reflect upon their contribution that provides us the freedoms we enjoy today.

House Concurrent Resolution 32 extends our sympathies to the families of loved ones whose perpetrators have yet been brought to justice.

Although this tragedy acknowledges the cost we pay in our fight against terrorism, we remain proud of our courageous and steadfast troops who are no doubt the best in the world. We call upon every American today to pause and pay tribute to the brave airmen who died, and to take a moment to thank our members of the Armed Forces currently serving around the world and express our appreciation for their duty and honor to protect America's interests around the world.

This resolution recognizes the service and sacrifice of those airmen whose lives were lost on that fateful day. I strongly urge my colleagues to support House Concurrent Resolution 32 in remembrance of the 19 fallen heroes on the 12th anniversary of the Dhahran terrorist bombing.

I thank my good friend and colleague from Florida (Mr. MILLER) for bringing forward this measure, and I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WITTMAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 32, honoring the 19 members of the United States Air Force who were killed, and more than 500 other Americans injured in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, by a terrorist truck bomb in June, 1996.

I want to commend my colleague on the House Armed Services Committee, Representative JEFF MILLER of Florida, for sponsoring this resolution. This is the fourth time that the House of Representatives has honored on this