

killings of aid workers, including the head of the U.N. Development Program in Mogadishu and three Somali elders who were shot while they were distributing food to displaced communities. According to the New York Times, at least 20 aid workers have been killed and 17 kidnapped since January. This is unacceptable. The international community, with the U.S. leading the way, must make clear that attacks on humanitarian workers will not be tolerated. Moreover, we must make sure that aid agencies, including the World Food Program, have sufficient resources to respond to the escalating needs on the ground.

Humanitarian assistance, however, only stops the bleeding temporarily. Transforming the underlying causes of Somalia's instability requires a political solution leading to a national government that is both representative and reconciliatory. As I said shortly after it was brokered last month, the Djibouti agreement—between the Transitional Federal Government and a moderate faction of the opposition group for the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia, ARS—was a positive step forward. I applaud the U.N. Representative of the Secretary General for taking a lead role and the U.S. Special Envoy for Somalia, Ambassador John Yates, for ensuring the U.S. was actively involved—but now it is time to get down to business.

I am concerned by the slow progress of implementation. Rather than moving quickly to shore up that agreement and injecting the necessary diplomatic resources, the international community has remained in a wait-and-see posture. This has allowed al-Shabaab and other spoilers to undermine the legitimacy of the agreement and divide the opposition party, rather than the other way around.

I have repeatedly called on the administration to develop a long-term comprehensive regional strategy toward Somalia backed by sufficient resources and political commitment. Our current approach is clearly not working. Relying on reactive and short-term tactics has limited our ability to change the security dynamics on the ground and in the wider region. An effective strategy begins with refocusing on the bigger picture and committing to our long-term goals, namely, helping Somalis to build robust democratic institutions that can provide security and undercut violent extremism—which poses a direct threat to the U.S.

It is not too late to salvage the opportunity presented by the Djibouti agreement. To do so, the United States and our international partners must move quickly with a coordinated diplomatic push to bring more Somalis into the process as well as put forth the necessary resources for implementation. An inclusive and vigorous political process can marginalize the appeal of al-Shabaab and other violent extremists, but only if we act now. Simultaneously, there must be a more

active effort to hold accountable all those who perpetrate violence and violate human rights. This includes strengthening the existing arms embargo and pressuring regional actors who undermine a sustainable political solution. It won't be easy, but it is critical to begin laying the groundwork for long-term peace and security.

The need to bring stability to Somalia is imperative not only to avert humanitarian catastrophe, but also for our national security. Next week, on August 7, we will commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, which left 224 people dead, including 12 U.S. citizens and dozens of other Embassy employees. That was a tragic day in American history. While some of those responsible have been brought to justice, there is still work to be done to ensure that the remaining suspects are held to account for their involvement in these heinous acts and that victims receive fair and just compensation.

Meanwhile, Somalia remains a safe haven for terrorists, as we know from the recent designation of the al-Shabaab and periodic Defense Department strikes against terrorist targets. But neither these strikes, nor other ad hoc or fragmented actions, can substitute for a sustained, comprehensive strategy. We must act aggressively against terrorists who pose a threat to our country, but it will take more than just military options alone to solve Somalia's problems. Instead of helping to build a society committed to the development of legitimate democratic institutions, we are effectively allowing Somalia to serve as a recruitment tool for insurgents and extremists as they further isolate various groups from the current political process. This is what the State Department itself said this past April about safe havens in places like Somalia:

Defeating the terrorist enemy requires a comprehensive effort executed locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. Working with partner nations, we must eliminate terrorist leadership, but incarcerating or killing terrorists will not achieve an end to terrorism. We must simultaneously eliminate terrorist safe havens, tailoring regional strategies to disaggregate terrorist networks and break terrorist financial, travel, communications, and intelligence links. Finally, and most challenging, we must address the underlying conditions that terrorists exploit at the national and local levels to induce alienated or aggrieved populations to become sympathizers, supporters, and ultimately members of terrorist networks. We can marginalize violent extremists by addressing people's needs and grievances, by giving people a stake in their own political future, and by providing alternatives to what terrorists offer.

The problem is not so much that the administration doesn't recognize what needs to be done, but that it doesn't have the will or the commitment to do it. Basically, our bark is bigger than our bite. Ten years after those attacks in Kenya and Tanzania, it appears we have missed the larger lesson of that

tragic day, and our front-line diplomats continue to pay the price as they scramble to respond to the problems of weak states caught up in a vicious and turbulent cycle of collapse. They aren't the only ones paying the price, however, as those failed states breed insecurity and conditions favorable for terrorism. Ten years on, the United States still does not have a long-term strategy to bring peace and stability to the Horn of Africa. We have tremendous diplomatic, military, intelligence, and foreign assistance resources at our disposal, but they are ineffective in the absence of a coordinated and balanced strategy that incorporates both the short- and long-term goals. This is no more evident than in Somalia.

It is not too late to chart a new path and prevent future suffering, but we must act decisively. As we remember those who lost their lives 10 years ago, many doing diplomatic work in some of the most demanding postings in the world, let us commit to honor their legacy by ensuring that our country is no longer vulnerable to the terrorists who attacked us a decade ago.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST JASON E. AMES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, my home State of Kentucky is mourning the loss of a brave young soldier. On August 31, 2005, SPC Jason E. Ames was killed while serving his country in Mosul, Iraq. Hailing from Cerulean, KY, Specialist Ames was 21 years old.

For his valor in uniform, Specialist Ames received several medals, decorations, and awards, including the Army Commendation Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Jason was taken from his loved ones much too soon. But those closest to him know he packed his 21 years with all he could. "Jason was always a happy-go-lucky person," says his mom Susan Foust. "Whatever he encountered . . . he did it with a lot of life and a lot of laughter."

Born in Illinois to a military family, Jason moved around a lot as a kid and saw many parts of the world. Wherever he went, he made his own fun.

Susan recalls:

Jason loved to play Army as a child and played it often with kids in the neighborhood. He made a suit out of camouflage netting, sticks, and leaves. Using the military acronym for Battle Dress Uniform—

She says—

he would also wear his mother's BDUs.

Susan also says:

Another favorite of Jason's was riding in his mother's Dodge convertible with the top down, no matter the weather, and listening to "Danger Zone" from "Top Gun."

Young Jason could also rely on the companionship of man's best friend. As Susan explains it:

Jason would often play in the woods for hours while trying to hide from the family dog named Moocher. I would tell Moocher to find Jason, and no matter how well hidden Jason thought he was, Moocher would find him.

Jason eventually settled in Cerulean, a town in Trigg County, in the southwestern part of my State. He attended Trigg County High School in Cadiz and graduated in 2003.

Even before reaching high school graduation, however, Jason felt strongly that he wanted to serve his country. Perhaps he was influenced by the respect for duty and service that ran deep in his family. At the age of 17, while still in high school, he asked his mother to grant her permission for him to enlist. Susan wanted Jason to wait until he turned 18, but Jason was so eager he convinced his mom to let him go ahead and sign up.

"We supported him with whatever decision he made," Susan says.

Jason enlisted and became an infantryman. By the time he was deployed to Iraq in October 2004, he was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, based in Fort Lewis, WA.

Sadly, Jason's life was taken just a few weeks shy of when he was due to return home and shortly before his 21st birthday.

The Reverend Ron Hicks, a close friend of the Ames family, officiated at the services, and Jason was buried with full military honors at the Kentucky Veterans Cemetery West in Hopkinsville, the Commonwealth's first State veterans cemetery.

Many beloved family members and friends across the country mourn Jason's loss, including his mother, Susan Arlene Ames Foust, and his sister Krystal Dawn Knight. Our thoughts turn to them as they are confronted with this great loss.

Jason's mom Susan says:

Jason had just turned 21 years old when he was taken. For the 21 years that he was with us, those years are priceless.

Susan and all of Jason's family are certainly right to treasure those 21 precious years. It is my hope they are also comforted by the knowledge that this country and this Senate honors SPC Jason E. Ames as a patriot and as a hero. He left his Nation stronger by his service and his sacrifice.

STAFF SERGEANT NICHOLAS R. CARNES

Additionally, Mr. President, I rise because another Kentucky family is missing a husband, son, and brother, and our great State is missing a patriot who loved his country. SSG Nicholas R. Carnes was tragically killed on October 26, 2007, in Afghanistan while in combat with the enemy. A native of Dayton, KY, he was 25 years old.

Staff Sergeant Carnes had volunteered for the mission that would be his last, stepping in for another soldier on leave. For his bravery and service, he received several medals, awards, and decorations, including the Combat Action Badge, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the Kentucky Distinguished Service Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Bronze Star Medal.

Because of a letter he sent to his wife Terri, we know why Nick chose to serve and place himself in harm's way. This is what he wrote in November 2006, a few weeks after he deployed to Afghanistan. He said:

Dear Terri . . . If the other soldiers who came before me did not stand up for freedom, then we would not have freedom. So I feel that I am obliged to stand up for freedom to ensure that everyone else after me has the same freedoms we do today.

Nick's family and friends remain inspired to this day by that young man's courage. His mother, WrayJean, puts it simply:

My son has been a hero from the second he was born. He became a bigger hero when he did the job he did over there.

Nick grew up in Dayton, and WrayJean and his father, Gove, recall he had a fun-filled and active childhood. He loved to hunt and he loved to fish. Gove taught him how to shoot. He played football in high school and practiced martial arts.

Nick loved country music, especially Johnny Cash, George Jones, and Hank Williams, Jr. "I have a country band and Nicholas would sing with us," Gove remembers.

His sister, Amanda Manasra, remembers: "We went four-wheeling often and got a little muddy."

She also remembers the time she and Nick built a treehouse, a treehouse Amanda was too scared to climb. "I never went up there," she says.

Nick helped me overcome my fear. He always pushed me over my limits. He always had a can-do attitude. He said: "can't" isn't in your vocabulary.

Gove and Gove's uncle were both in the Kentucky National Guard, and Nick grew up climbing on Army trucks. In 1999, when he was 17, he entered a Guard training program and by his senior year at Dayton High School, Nick was in the Guard. "It was in his blood," WrayJean said.

There was no stopping the desire. He would say, "Who would keep us free if I don't do this?"

Nick graduated from high school in 2000 and went to work for BB Riverboats, a company that runs riverboat cruises along the Ohio River. It was there he met Terri, the woman he would ask to become his wife. "We ran off to Las Vegas for my 30th birthday," Terri says.

When we were there, we went to Lake Mead . . . he got on his knee and asked me to marry him. I said, "Sure! Let's go!" It was meant to be.

With a happy life and friends and family who loved him, Nick still felt the call to duty. WrayJean remembers

what Nick said to her on the day of the worst terrorist attack in this Nation's history.

"When 9/11 happened, Nicholas and I sat side by side on the couch," she says.

We both sat there with tears rolling down our face. He said, "This is what I want to do."

Terri also remembers how her husband was eager to serve. "He could not wait to go overseas," she says.

He would say, "Can you imagine preparing for your whole life and never getting to fight for your country?" He loved what he was doing over there . . . I know he would do it again.

Nick's Guard unit was activated and he was eventually deployed to Afghanistan with Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, based out of Carrollton, KY. His friend, Brian Sawyer, who served alongside him, remembers Nick's dedication to his training and to his mission.

"Nick was by the rulebook," Brian says.

When he graded my physical training test, if it wasn't a push-up by the books, he didn't count it. . . . With everybody, he was by the book. Not mean, but fair. Fair and firm. . . . He knew pushing me to do the push-up the right way was better for me.

Nick believed he had been sent to Afghanistan to make people's lives better, and he did it even in his downtime. He asked Terri to send him toys and gifts he could distribute to the kids there.

"Everything he did was sweet," Terri says.

It was rare, because mainly guys typically aren't caring and understanding. He was different than all the rest.

Nick's work ethic also impressed everyone. His commanding officer, MAJ Walt Leaumont, had this to say:

When Nick came into the National Guard originally, I was his battery commander. He was this little chubby 18-year-old who had a spirit that wouldn't quit. He had a positive attitude. He was a dream to command.

Sadly, Major Leaumont was also the officer charged with the sad task of telling Nick's family he would not be coming home. "The night I notified his family was probably the toughest time I have ever worn this uniform," the major recalls.

Our prayers are with the Carnes family after their terrible loss. We are thinking of his wife Terri Bernstein-Carnes; his mother WrayJean; his father Gove; his sisters, Amanda Manasra and Sarah Carnes; his brother Brian Carnes; his grandmother, Frankie Glascock; his grandfather, Gove Carnes, Jr.; his stepmother Charlotte Carnes, and many other beloved family members and friends.

Nick was predeceased by his grandfather, Earl Glascock, and his grandmother, Hazel Carnes.

Before Nick shipped out, he and his family threw a birthday party for his wife Terri. Nick's sister, Amanda, jokingly told him:

You don't have to go. I can break your legs.

But Nick would have none of it. He told his little sister:

Just always know that I did it for us and I did it for them. This was my destiny given by God and I have to fulfill it.

SSG Nicholas R. Carnes represented the very best his town, his State, and his Nation have to offer. His service and his sacrifice prove it. The Senate is proud to honor men like him who see that America needs defending and bravely step forward to defend it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS IN THE 110TH CONGRESS

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, as we prepare to return to our home States, I believe it is important to remind our colleagues about the work we have done for the veterans of this Nation. As Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have had the privilege of working with almost every entity and level of Government, veterans and military service organizations across the Nation, and every branch of the military, in an ongoing effort to better serve those who have served us.

In the past 19 months, the committee has held over 50 hearings, taking testimony from over 320 witnesses. The committee staff has carried out over 140 days of investigations and visits across the country. I commend the hard-working members of our committee, on both sides of the aisle, for their work this session.

After years of underfunding veterans programs, I wish to remind everyone that this Congress appropriated the largest increase in the history of the Department of Veterans Affairs. These funds are helping to provide better health care to veterans and enabling the Veterans Benefits Administration to hire thousands of new employees. It is my profound hope this investment will produce marked improvements in care and in reduced backlog of veterans' disability claims. Last year, in connection with the disclosures about Walter Reed, America learned of the disgraceful treatment of some of our disabled servicemembers and veterans. Congress responded promptly and the Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs Committees collaborated in an unprecedented manner to address the issues at Walter Reed and elsewhere. One result of this cooperation was the wounded warrior provisions included in last year's National Defense Authorization Act.

I take special pride in one particular wounded warrior provision which more than doubled the period of automatic VA health care eligibility for returning troops. Servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are now eligible for 5 years of VA health care upon separation from service.

I am also pleased with the work we have done in seeking an expanded out-

reach to veterans of the National Guard and Reserve. It is vital that the growing role they play in our all-volunteer military be recognized and that those who have been deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan be recognized and helped.

Congress also enacted the 21st Century GI bill of rights. Like others who served in World War II, I personally know how that GI bill changed our country for the better. I hope this improved benefit will provide similar help for today's and tomorrow's troops.

But for all we have done, much remains unfinished in these waning weeks. Important legislation is pending in both the House and the Senate. To name two bills, we are still waiting for action on S. 1315 and S. 2162.

S. 1315, the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007, would provide needed assistance to veterans young and old, including the Filipino veterans of World War II who served under U.S. command but were denied veterans status for over 60 years.

S. 2162 is the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008. This bill responds to the growing need among veterans for high quality mental health care. Many veterans return from war suffering from invisible wounds. If left untreated, these wounds can infect a veteran's life and livelihood, with dire consequences. The bill represents a tribute to Justin Bailey, a young Iraq veteran who overdosed while under VA care. We must not let other veterans suffer a similar tragedy.

Both of these bills passed the Senate with unanimous or nearly unanimous support, and both count strong supporters in the House. I hope that before this session ends, we will see both become law.

I do not report today that our work for veterans is anywhere near done, but I do say it is work in progress. I thank my colleagues in both Chambers and both parties for their support and cooperation.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM BREW

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, as chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I normally come to the Senate floor and speak on various veterans issues—I advocate for increased screening and treatment and mental health issues for our veterans; I remind my fellow Senators that veterans of their home States must file income taxes for 2008 in order to receive their tax rebates; I argue for increased funding for VA's vital mission; and I urge the Senate to approve a new GI bill. Today, however, I come to the Senate floor to speak about one particular veteran—a Vietnam veteran who has dedicated his long career, enormous talents, and tireless efforts to better the treatment and the lives of all who have served our Nation in uniform. Today, I will speak of my staff director, William Brew.

Bill has just completed 20 years of service to the Senate. His entire tenure

in the Senate has been at the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Bill started in the Senate on April 3, 1978. At that time, his desk was in what is now the committee's hearing room. The chairman was Alan Cranston of California. The major issues were Agent Orange, judicial review, and the emerging medical condition that had newly been labeled post-traumatic stress disorder. As a former naval officer, and a lawyer, Bill was thrown right into these issues, and his presence made a huge difference.

An immediate and pressing need was to provide psychological counseling to Vietnam veterans at a time when the war and, sadly, even those who fought in it, remained a divisive issue for our Nation. Men and women who had served during that conflict did not return to heroes' welcomes, yellow ribbons, and joyous neighborhood celebrations we so often see today. In 1980, in Van Nuys, CA, one of the very first vet centers opened and offered a means of providing community-based counseling and outreach services to those who were returning from Southeast Asia. Now, there are 232 scattered around the country.

Millions of veterans and their families from all wars have received counseling and support through these centers. Bill was instrumental in developing the legislation that established these facilities and was present at the creation of vet centers.

Bill was deeply involved in the debates surrounding Agent Orange and quickly became an expert on an issue whose vocabulary revolved around dioxin, defoliation, Ranch Hand, and a variety of health problems and concerns. His efforts contributed to the development of wide-ranging initiatives designed to address the needs of those who believe their exposure has adversely affected their health.

Bill was instrumental in the passage of legislation in 1996, which fundamentally changed the law with regard to eligibility for VA health care. Eligibility Reform, as this law is known, eradicated the line between inpatient and outpatient care. VA, for the first time, was authorized to provide a standard benefits package of services in the most appropriate care setting. This seemingly simple change enabled VA to open up community-based clinics all across this country. Veterans care has been dramatically improved because of the increased access to the now 700 clinics dotting the landscape.

Assisting disabled veterans to reenter civilian life has always been a high priority for the committee. Bill worked on legislation to revamp federally assisted State vocational rehabilitation programs, giving priority to the most seriously disabled.

Bill was instrumental in the establishment of the Court of Veterans Claims, which gave judicial review to veterans' benefit determinations, and the committee recently approved legislation to expand the Court.