

he reserves a special place in his heart for the House Democracy Partnership, often forgoing travel to more glamorous destinations in order to escort our commission to countries such as Liberia, Afghanistan and Timor Leste, where the need for the kind of institutional support we can provide is the greatest.

On these trips, Major Koumparakis has not only excelled as an expert travel coordinator, diplomat and logistician, he has also established himself as an adviser to HDP's work, and an integral part of our programming with partner legislatures. And, of course, he has demonstrated his legendary ability to solve problems and deliver results in the most difficult circumstances.

Let me give one striking example. On one occasion last year, we had a particularly ambitious around-the-world itinerary that included a stop in Hungary to commemorate the fall of the Iron Curtain followed by working visits with the legislatures of Mongolia, Indonesia and Timor Leste. But, unfortunately, our arrival in Budapest was delayed twice by a vote on a major bill here and then weather. By the time we were finally bound for Mongolia, we had nearly exhausted our window to pass through Chinese air space. We faced the prospect of having to divert our mission and forgo the opportunity to make progress with the Mongolian parliament. Well, Major Koumparakis came to the rescue. Working literally through the night, he somehow managed to persuade an official of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing to rouse a Chinese official at his personal residence, on a weekend, no less, and call in a favor to get us the clearance we needed. That is an anecdote that says a lot about the major. It is a small example of his dedication and creativity and good humor. He has just been an indispensable member of the House Liaison Office, and he leaves some very large shoes to fill.

Now in recognition of his service and leadership potential, he has been assigned to what can only be assigned as a hardship billet in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he will attend a command and staff program at the Argentine Naval War College. As he departs Capitol Hill for this next step in his career, we bid him farewell with heartfelt respect and admiration.

RECOGNIZING MAJOR SPEROS KOUNPARAKIS

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield for him to conclude his remarks to the very distinguished chairman of the House Democracy Partnership and the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. I thank the gentleman. I will be very brief, but I do want to add a word.

Mr. DREIER. Absolutely. I would say that the gentleman has used all of my talking points, so the challenge for me will be following the completion of his remarks.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. The gentleman is never at a loss for talking points. I am assured of that. We do need to say something, and I want to do it, acknowledging Major Koumparakis's wife Bree, who also deserves our gratitude and our respect for supporting her husband through 3 long years of early hours and frequent travels and an uncertain schedule. She shows a lot of the same dedication and selflessness that the major himself does. And we are just hopeful that this new assignment in Buenos Aires is going to offer her some light at the end of the tunnel, just as it will the major.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and let me just say at the outset that it is very important to note that Major Koumparakis is going to be going to Buenos Aires by way of California. He is going to be going for language training to Monterey, California.

Let me say that my very good friend, Mr. PRICE, has talked about the importance of Speros' work in dealing with the missions that have been put forth by this House, and specifically the House Democracy Partnership. And I would just like to say that when we look at the work of our partnership, Madam Speaker, one of the very important things to note is the fact that we have gone to, as Mr. PRICE indicated, some of the most troubled spots in the world. When I think about trips to Ulan Bator, Mongolia; Monrovia, Liberia; Nairobi, Kenya; and clearly Kabul, Afghanistan, the notion of congressional travel is one where I think the perception is that most travel takes place in other spots, when in fact this House Democracy Partnership has been focused on a very important mission.

Four years ago this spring when I had the privilege of beginning with Mr. PRICE this partnership and took on the task of putting together the countries with which we were going to partner in working to build the parliaments, I at the very outset looked to the United States Marine Corps. Now for full disclosure, I have to say I am very partial. My father, sometimes I regretted this, Madam Speaker, but my father was a drill instructor in the United States Marine Corps. I regretted it the first 18 years of my life especially, but I survived it. One of the things that happened when I first had the opportunity to chair the House Democracy Partnership, I made the decision that we wanted to have the United States Marine Corps play the important role of orchestrating and leading with the assistance that only they could provide these efforts.

Frankly, as we looked, Madam Speaker, at the task that was before us, it was very appropriate for the United States Marine Corps, and up until now with the departure of Deputy

Director Koumparakis, among other great people who have served in the past, to take this task on because the United States Marine Corps are in fact on duty in embassies throughout the world. They are on the frontline in those embassies and play a very important role. And I happen to believe—well, I will say this. Many of the other branches, with all due respect to every single one of them, approached me and said that they wanted to play a role in doing this. And I said the answer was yes, they could, as long as they enlisted in the United States Marine Corps.

So I can't say enough about Speros Koumparakis and the work he has done and the effort that the United States Marine Corps has put into especially the House Democracy Partnership.

What we have done, Madam Speaker, as Mr. PRICE said, 15 countries, 15 countries around the world, new and re-emerging democracies, where we have had the task of trying to help them take these fragile democracies and build their parliaments. When we think about it, it is very important to recognize that our relationship is so often simply with the head of state. But if we are going to build up democratic institutions, there is none more important than parliaments that have independence and a very, very good grasp and an opportunity for oversight at the executive branch. And Speros regularly understood that and played a key role in making sure that the House Democracy Partnership could complete its mission.

And so, Madam Speaker, I simply want to join with my colleague, Mr. PRICE, in extending congratulations to Speros and to Bree. I know they are going to continue that very fine service to the United States of America in their work both in California and in Buenos Aires, and we look forward to getting great reports on him.

SOBERING REPORT ON AFGHANISTAN

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, last week the Pentagon released its 6-month status update on the war in Afghanistan. It is a sobering report indeed, one that should make all of us question the very legitimacy of this mission.

There has been a huge uptick in violence, including a 240 percent increase in roadside bomb attacks. The Karzai government's support has sunk to embarrassing lows as more than 80 percent of Afghan citizens say government corruption has an impact on their lives and barely one in four Afghans rate U.S. and NATO forces as "good" or "very good."

This isn't LYNN WOOLSEY or the Congressional Progressive Caucus talking at this moment, this is a report from

the very people responsible for the strategy. And yet at the same time contrary to all apparent evidence, we continue to get the same spin and happy talk from the Pentagon.

After the report was delivered to Congress last week, one senior defense official said: "We have the beginning of the potential for real change."

Madam Speaker, it is long past the moment when we should be talking about the "beginning of the potential for real change." I think 8½ years is plenty of time for real change and not just the beginning of its potential.

We have been patient. We have seen more than a thousand of our fellow Americans killed. We have seen about \$270 billion in taxpayer money fly out of the Treasury. And after all that, Afghanistan is still a terrifyingly dangerous place that can't stand on its own two feet, unable to handle its own security, with an incompetent government that enjoys little confidence or credibility.

The whole point of our counterinsurgency strategy was to get the people on the side of the government and our military forces. But, Madam Speaker, continued instability is instead driving the civilian population straight into the arms of the Taliban. Again, don't take it from me. The Pentagon report notes a "ready supply of recruits is drawn from the frustrated population, where insurgents exploit poverty, tribal friction and lack of governance to grow their ranks."

Mr. Speaker, with the Kandahar offensive about to begin, the situation figures to get even worse, especially given that more than 80 percent of the Kandahar population embraces the Taliban as "Afghan brothers" while 94 percent oppose U.S. troop presence. That is according to the Army's own research, as cited by defense scholar Michael Cohen. The security situation in Kandahar is already bad enough that the U.N. has pulled its people out.

Madam Speaker, we need a complete reorientation of U.S. policy towards Afghanistan. We need a smart security approach that rebuilds the country instead of tearing it apart. We need to send legal scholars who can help establish rule of law and a functional judicial system. We need to send agricultural experts who can give Afghan farmers an alternative to the poppy trade which is controlled by the Taliban. Most of all, Madam Speaker, we need an immediate military redeployment. It is time to bring our troops home.

WHAT IS THE PLAN?

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, our homeland security today is paralyzed by denial, ignorance and political correctness. Systematic dependence on luck is not a national security plan; it is a disaster waiting to happen.

From the borders to the big cities, America's national security is always in critical, or seems to be in critical disarray. In 1998, Osama bin Laden declared war on America, but we didn't pay attention to it. What is it going to take for our leaders to understand that radical Islamic terrorists want to murder our people?

□ 1945

Law enforcement in New York—Federal, State, and city—has done an incredible job in a short amount of time to apprehend the Times Square terrorist despite dangerous political games being played by some officials. In spite of politics, our lawmen acted swiftly, efficiently, and effectively in the capture of this terrorist.

But New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg told the media, "If I had to guess 25 cents, this would be . . . home-grown, maybe a mentally deranged person or someone with a political agenda that doesn't like the health care bill or something."

Now, isn't that helpful?

The Times Square terrorist, Faisal Shahzad, was not a Tea Party-going taxpayer opposed to ObamaCare. There is no excuse for this reckless smear of the majority of Americans who opposes the government takeover of health care. It is irresponsible to play political games with national security; and even though Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano won't use the word "terrorist," all of the indications are that this was an act of terror.

The terrorist, Faisal Shahzad, was captured last night on an airplane bound for Dubai. Reports say the airline contacted the authorities to say that he made a last-minute reservation for the flight and that he got on the plane after paying cash. He is from Pakistan. Somehow, this radical terrorist was granted American citizenship in 2009. Shahzad told the FBI he went through a terror training camp in Pakistan in the region of Waziristan.

He sounds like a terrorist to me.

This is where the Taliban operates—the same Pakistani Taliban that immediately claimed responsibility for the Times Square foiled attack. Reports say Shahzad had been in Pakistan for the past several months. Eight people have now been arrested in Pakistan. Two of them are related to Shahzad.

Over the past year, we have had a surge of attacks from radical Islamic jihadists who murder in the name of hate. For example, the Fort Hood shooter killed 14 Americans and injured 30 more. That was an act of terror. The attack on the Arkansas military recruiting station by a radical jihadist who killed an American soldier was an act of terror. Then there was the Christmas Day underwear bomber. That was an act of terror.

In that case, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said "the system worked" when we caught the underwear bomber. That means the gov-

ernment plan in that case is for passengers on the plane to tackle terrorists who are trying to explode bombs that are hidden in their underwear. That's a plan? That's our national system?

Combating terrorism takes vision. It takes moral clarity. There is no room for playing politics or politically correct games.

Ronald Reagan once explained it this way:

"Above all, we must realize that no arsenal or no weapon in the arsenals of the world is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women.

"It is a weapon our adversaries in today's world do not have. It is a weapon that we as Americans do have.

"Let that be understood by those who practice terrorism and prey upon their neighbors."

And that's just the way it is.

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

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

HONORING THE WOMEN'S FUND OF MIAMI-DADE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, in 1993, a group of south Florida women established the Women's Fund of Miami-Dade, a nonprofit dedicated to funding innovative community programs geared toward girls and young women.

At the time of the fund's creation, gender-specific, community-based initiatives were nearly nonexistent. According to a survey undertaken by the Women's Fund in 1996, only five out of 142 local agencies had implemented programs exclusively for women. Absent from our community were programs to assist young women who were seeking to advance their educations, to secure their economic futures, or to engage in professional leadership training.

The Women's Fund of Miami-Dade took this cause to our south Florida community, and it has since generated enough support to provide more than 350 gender-specific programs with the funding they so desperately require.

Last Friday, on April 30, more than 800 women gathered together at the Women's Fund annual Power of the