

Bryan Nichols, Chief Warrant Officer, United States Army National Guard, Kansas.

Spencer Duncan, Specialist, United States Army Reserve, Kansas.

Nicholas Null, Chief Petty Officer, United States Navy SEAL, West Virginia.

Thomas Ratzlaff, Senior Chief Petty Officer, United States Navy SEAL, Arkansas.

Brian Bill, Chief Petty Officer, United States Navy SEAL, Connecticut.

And John Douangdara, Petty Officer 1st Class, United States Navy SEAL, Nebraska.

Mr. Speaker, these are the men who gave their lives so that others could live. And while we mourn the lives they gave for the rest of us, we should thank the good Lord that such men as these lived—the Americans, the American breed, the rare breed, the finest we have.

And that's just the way it is.

REBUILDING AND RENEWING AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there has been much talk about jobs and economic recovery—sadly, more talk than action.

Today's consideration of extending the Surface Transportation Act and the FAA Authorization, both of which have expired, is a positive development. It puts a little more certainty for our partners in the State and local government. It avoids disastrous revenue losses. It's a positive signal of cooperation, with Chairs MICA and BOXER working with Majority Leader REID and Speaker BOEHNER. And it leaves important policies intact.

The 1991 ISTEA framework has proven effective in meeting transportation needs and providing economic activity. But now let's concentrate on what we do need.

We need more money, not less. Certainly we must reject the 30 percent transportation cut that is called for in the Republican budget, or a 34 percent reduction that's called for in the Transportation appropriations bill that is being considered. We need longer-term legislation, not shorter. Three months for aviation, 6 months for transportation is better than what we've been putting up with, but certainly not what our partners deserve.

Finally, we need more partnerships with our regional engines of growth at the local level, not a pullback by the Federal Government. We need a full reauthorization, one that is right sized for America's needs. We need to be more ambitious in terms of what we spend. Remember all the expert bipartisan commissions that called for much greater levels of investment 5 years ago. The need has not declined at all.

□ 1010

We can and we should combine these efforts with deficit reduction and economic recovery. This is what happened with Ronald Reagan in 1982, with Bill Clinton in 1993, what was called for by Simpson and Bowles, the cochairs of President Obama's deficit reduction commission.

Make no mistake. Unmet infrastructure needs threaten the health and safety of our communities, our environment, and our global competitiveness. Congress will find a tremendous coalition supporting bold action from the business community, organized labor, contractors, environmentalists, engineers, architects, local government. The list is extensive, broad, and the commitment is deep. Many communities and some States have already stepped up on their own.

It's now time for the Federal Government to be a better partner, reclaiming the legacy of Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and Eisenhower, back when infrastructure investment was not partisan or particularly controversial, but a national vision that brought us together.

We can begin by passing this legislation later this afternoon. We need to move to a larger and a longer term agenda as we rebuild and renew America, jump-start the economy, and make our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, like all my colleagues, I was home during the August break, accepting opportunities to speak at civic clubs, at town forums, and I did speak to a couple of military retiree groups.

Every time that I would make the statement that it is time to bring our troops home from Afghanistan—Mr. Speaker, I'm not an excellent speaker, I'm not even a good speaker, but I got applause, strong applause, from every one of those groups that I just named. They agree with me and many of my colleagues, one being on the floor today, JIM MCGOVERN from Massachusetts, that it's time to bring an end to our involvement in Afghanistan.

The amount of loss of lives is just astounding. And I have beside me a poster that depicts the pain of war. This lady and her little girl are accepting a folded flag off the coffin of her husband and the little girl's daddy. And the little girl is looking up like "I don't know what's happening." The wife is crying.

How many more families have to cry? How many children have to say, "I don't know my daddy; I didn't know my daddy because I was so young when he died"?

The President is asking for a jobs program. I think he's doing the right

thing. Yet we're spending \$10 billion a month in Afghanistan to prop up a corrupt leader. It makes no sense. It doesn't make any sense to the American people, and it makes no sense to many of us in the House, both Republican and Democrat.

I understand from the newspapers that there's a conversation now going on between the United States and Afghanistan which would provide so-called "strategic partnership agreement" between the two, America and Afghanistan, and this means that we could keep approximately 35,000 to 40,000 troops past 2014, 2015. This does not make any sense. I hope that this is not true, but I'm afraid that it is true.

And something else that bothers me about this conversation is that it will not be called a treaty because, if it's called a treaty, it has to come to Congress and be approved by Congress. This, again, takes away the voice of the American people, especially on this issue of Afghanistan, when the American people, in large numbers in all the latest polls, are saying get out, get out, get out.

History has proven that Afghanistan will never be anything more than what it is today. Great nations have tried in the past to try to create a national government in Afghanistan, and it never happened. Here we are going to spend \$10 billion a month, \$120 billion a year, to rebuild Afghanistan, and we don't even have the money to rebuild America.

I hope that the Congress will join those of us, again, Mr. MCGOVERN and myself and many others I could name in the House, that want to bring our troops home.

It brings me back to an article written by Andrew Bacevich. He was a Vietnam veteran himself. His son was killed in Iraq. And he wrote an article in the American Conservative about 2 years ago called "To Die for a Mystique," talking about Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we will continue to bring forward on the floor of the House the issue of Afghanistan. It's not right to those families. It's not right to our military. Many of them have had five, six, seven deployments. They're tired. They're worn out. They've done their job. Bin Laden is dead. Al Qaeda has been moved out of Afghanistan. It is time to bring them home and rebuild America and help our veterans find jobs. I want to thank the President for mentioning that yesterday. We've got to help our veterans find jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close now as I always do because it comes from my heart. I've signed over 10,374 letters since we went into Iraq. That was a mistake on my part to give President Bush the authority to go into a war that never had to be fought.

So I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I ask God, in His loving arms, to hold the families

who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I ask God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people. I ask God to give wisdom, strength, and courage to President Obama, that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for God's people.

And I will say three times, God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE: HOPE IN MEDELLIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, at the end of August, I was part of a weeklong fact-finding delegation to Colombia coordinated by the Washington Office on Latin America.

Our first stop was in Medellin. Hailed during 2005 to 2008 as the so-called "Medellin Miracle," we now know that the miracle was more illusion than reality, created by the iron fist of paramilitary leader Diego Murillo, alias Don Berna. He controlled all criminal activity in the poorest districts, or comunas, as they're known, that surround central Medellin. Since his 2008 extradition to the United States, hell has returned to the comunas, as neo-paramilitary drug lords fight for control of drug trafficking, extortion, and other criminal activity.

But the "miracle" wasn't a total illusion. During those years of relative calm, the municipal government, under Mayor Sergio Fajardo, and his successor, current Mayor Alonso Salazar, made significant investments in youth organizations, education, and basic human services in the poorest neighborhoods. In greater Medellin, investments resulted in public parks, recreational spaces, culture, and a new public transit system. These changes, large and small, have helped civil society to better weather and confront the current explosion of violence that keeps Medellin in the ranks of Latin America's most violent cities.

There are an estimated 3,800 or more gang members in Medellin. And about 70 percent of their ranks are made up of young people between the ages of 11 and 17. In the past 2 years, nearly 2,000 young people between the ages of 11 and 25 have been killed.

We spent an entire day meeting with people and youth organizations in three of the city's most violent districts, Comunas 13, 8, and 5. Our guides were the dedicated staff of Fundacion Mi Sangre. They introduced us to John Jaime Sanchez, the director of Son Bata, an Afro-Colombian group that has achieved international fame by using music to help Comuna 13's young people find alternatives to violence.

We visited a local YMCA and its director, Alexandra Castillon. The YMCA has long served as an anchor and neu-

tral space in Comuna 13. There we met leaders from Hip Hop Red Elite, Hip Hoppers for Peace, and the Kolacho School, a music training school named in memory of a young boy killed in Comuna 13. The groups reach young people through the use of music and dance, helping them become leaders. These youth then use their art to reach others in their schools and on the streets with the message of non-violence.

We went across town to Casa de la Cultura, one of the few neutral spaces in Comuna 8.

□ 1020

We met students in youth groups called Diafora, La Villa, AK-47, New Dance and others. Their determination and enthusiasm to create a better future were undeniable. Rap group AK-47 joined with students playing classical music. They put on a stunning rap program against gang violence. I could have listened to their powerful words and music all day.

We ended the day sitting on the ground above a small park in Comuna 5 talking with more than 20 youth leaders about their daily lives and how they use art to promote human rights, recapture historic memory, and create a better community. I told them they should run for office because Medellin's future depended on their leadership.

The next day, our delegation returned to Comuna 5, this time with the Catholic Church and the mayor's adviser on peace and reconciliation. We met former and current gang members. We heard impassioned stories about how they want to leave the gangs and the endless violence. It's not an easy choice. They fear retaliation and not being able to support their families.

Many people in Medellin are helping them lay down their arms, but their futures are dangerous and limited. They also lack confidence in the police, some of whom are allied with one faction or another in the gang wars.

These youth put themselves at risk for advocating alternatives to violence and envisioning a future far different from the reality that surrounds them. They deserve our respect and our support—not just with funding but by increasing their visibility and their legitimacy.

Rarely on my trips to Colombia have I left the place with such strong and positive feelings; and after spending time in the most dangerous areas of the city, I came away with a sense of hope.

I often speak of what's going wrong in Colombia and the many problems that need to be addressed. In Medellin I found many examples of what is going right.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 22 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend Dr. Leroy Adams, Jr., Morning Star Baptist Church, Omaha, Nebraska, offered the following prayer:

Our God, we come with gratitude for another day and with thanksgiving in our hearts for the privilege of life and the opportunity to make this day purposeful.

We ask for Your blessings to this legislative body as they govern the welfare of all people of this great Nation. Endow them with wisdom, discernment, courage, and conviction to engage the issues of our day and for the generations to come to be better off as a result of all decisions made within this assembly hall.

Finally, I pray to You that a spirit of cooperation and sincerity would transcend our Nation to have solidarity, peace, and equality for all.

We ask this to be done this day and in the days to come to give glory and honor to You, our God, and we pray that Your blessings be upon us always.

In Your name, we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JOHNSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING REVEREND DR. LEROY ADAMS, JR.

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

(Mr. TERRY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize our guest chaplain, my fellow Nebraskan and friend, Reverend Dr. Leroy E. Adams, Jr., who has served as the senior pastor of Omaha's