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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBSTER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 12, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

GUN VIOLENCE ECLIPSES FISCAL CLIFF DEBATE

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. It's difficult to focus on the task at hand in the aftermath of a shooting rampage in my district yesterday. With at least 10,000 people in a shopping mall, a young man allegedly, say some eyewitnesses, in body armor, and armed with a semi-automatic weapon discharged 60 or more shots. There were two people killed and a young 15-year-old girl seriously wounded.

Mr. Speaker, one is haunted by these events. We had one in Aurora, Colorado, at the theater where there were 12 people killed, 60 wounded; six people killed at the Sikh temple this summer; and the day spa in Milwaukee, where three women were killed before the shooter turned the gun on himself. We had a horrific episode earlier in my congressional career in Springfield, Oregon.

It is hard to have meaningful conversations on a variety of subjects. I was going to deal with that problem with the fiscal cliff today, but gun violence is another area in America where it seems we can't have a discussion without delusional claims of overreach and taking away hunting rifles. Congress won't even allow statistics on gun violence to be gathered, and we certainly have made no progress towards closing the gun show loophole.

Yet I come today, in the aftermath of this tragedy, with a small ray of hope. When nearly half of all military suicides are committed with privately owned weapons, the Pentagon and Congress are moving towards establishing policies to separate at-risk servicemembers from personal private weapons. Congress is poised to enact legislation to end a prohibition about the military collecting information about firearms kept at home. These are simple, commonsense steps for an armed services where more military personnel take their own life than who die in battle.

Perhaps if we can take these reasonable steps to protect our servicemen and their families, perhaps we can develop the courage to treat the epidemic of gun violence with the same thoughtful, small steps when it comes to protecting the rest of our families. Until then, we will mourn the victims and thank God that our families were not at that mall.

AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, in this very chaotic time for the House of Representatives and for the American people, we need to remain focused on the fact that our young men and women are still dying in Afghanistan. Our involvement in Afghanistan has become a confused strategy at best.

Mr. Speaker, I will submit a news article for the RECORD. The title of this article is: Afghan peace plan gives U.S. smaller role. With it, Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit 12 names of American servicepeople killed recently.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to listen to the American people and start acting on their wishes. Poll after poll shows that they want to get out of Afghanistan now, they want our troops home, they want to stop seeing our young men and women dying, and the American people want the \$10 billion a month being spent in Afghanistan to be spent here in America to help all our economic problems. I do not understand why we in Congress seem to be without debate about this problem in Afghanistan.

We are currently in the process of a bilateral security agreement that will keep our troops in Afghanistan for 10 years after 2014. Where is the outrage by Congress? We are financially broke. We complain all the time about we can't reach this deal or that deal, we're going over the cliff, and yet our troops are dying in Afghanistan and we're spending money we don't have.

Mr. Speaker, the article states:

The Afghan Government is pursuing a peace initiative in which Pakistan would replace the United States in arranging talks between the warring sides and the Taliban would be granted government posts that effectively could cede to them political control of the southern and the eastern strongholds.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Mr. Speaker, those areas are where we've lost most of our young men and women fighting the war in Afghanistan, and yet we are going to give those areas where our young men and women died to the Taliban so they can control it? Where is the outrage here in Congress? I do not know.

Mr. Speaker, in plain English, Afghanistan is allowing Pakistan and the Taliban to control half the country. And while the Taliban takes back Afghanistan, how does this make any sense? Where is the outrage? The American people are outraged, Mr. Speaker, but not Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I have beside me a poster that tells pain. There is this little girl sitting in her mother's arms. The mother is crying. The little girl is so young, she doesn't know why this Army officer is presenting her mother a flag. She doesn't know that her daddy has been killed. She will one day, and she'll ask her mom, What was my daddy like? And the mom will say, He was a great man. He would love to see you now as you've grown older, but he died in a country known as Afghanistan, a country that will never change, no matter how much blood or how much money is spent in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, before closing, I have a Web site that if people would join and sign, and the Web site is www.bringthemhome2013.com.

It is time for this administration and Congress to say enough has been done. It is time to bring our young men and women home. If Pakistan is going to have more influence in Afghanistan than America, then let Pakistan send their soldiers to die in Afghanistan. Let Pakistan pay the \$10 billion a month that America is paying right now—and it is borrowed money from the Chinese.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will close by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq, God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what's right for the American people in the House and the Senate. I ask God to give strength, wisdom, and courage to President Obama that he would do what is right in the eyes of God, and I'll close by asking three times, God please, God please, God please continue to bless America.

[From the McClatchy Washington Bureau,
Dec. 8, 2012]

AFGHANISTAN PEACE PLAN WOULD INCREASE PAKISTAN'S ROLE (By Jonathan S. Landay)

The Afghan government is pursuing an ambitious new peace initiative in which Pakistan would replace the United States in arranging direct talks between the warring sides and the Taliban would be granted government posts that effectively could cede to them political control of their southern and eastern strongholds.

If implemented, the plan would diminish the role of the United States in the peace process, but would still leave Washington with input on a number of critical issues, in-

cluding the terms for initiating negotiations. Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Great Britain also would be involved.

The plan envisions ending the war by 2015 through a ceasefire and negotiations in the second half of next year, most likely in Saudi Arabia. Pakistan would help select the leaders of the Taliban and other rebel groups who would take part in the negotiations with the Afghan government. The effort, the plan says, should be conducted "through one consistent and coherent channel," a measure that would secure a role for Afghan President Hamid Karzai after the end of his term following April 2014 elections.

Another provision would give the insurgents a voice on "issues related . . . to the withdrawal" of the U.S.-led NATO force by the end of 2014.

The plan foresees the United States working with Kabul and Islamabad in determining which insurgent leaders would participate. The United States also would be critical to approving the removal of the insurgent negotiators from the U.N.'s list of terrorists.

Entitled "Peace Process Roadmap to 2015," the blueprint represents a decision by Karzai—in close coordination with Pakistan—to assume the lead in peace-making efforts following the collapse earlier this year of an Obama administration bid to persuade the Taliban to participate in direct talks with Kabul.

The new initiative comes amid persistent distrust between Karzai and the Obama administration and deep insecurity in Kabul over future U.S. support. Those concerns and the U.S. failure to arrange peace talks appear to have pushed Karzai closer to Pakistan, whose army and main intelligence service are widely believed to exercise significant influence over Taliban and other militant leaders based in Pakistan's border areas with Afghanistan.

The plan also comes as the ongoing U.S. combat troop pullout and cuts in U.S. financial aid to Afghanistan are fueling fears in both countries that violence and instability could worsen, spurring them to take matters into their own hands.

The blueprint, a copy of which was obtained by McClatchy, officially is the work of Afghanistan's High Peace Council, which is charged with overseeing government peace efforts. But it was drafted by Karzai and his inner circle over the past six months in coordination with Pakistan, according to a person familiar with the document who requested anonymity because of the matter's sensitivity.

The plan was presented to Pakistan and the United States during visits last month by High Peace Council Chairman Salauddin Rabbani, who Karzai named to the post after Rabbani's father, former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, was assassinated in September 2011.

The State Department declined to comment on the plan, refusing even to confirm its existence. However, a State Department official, who requested anonymity because of the issue's sensitivity, was authorized to say that, "The United States continues to support an Afghan-led peace process and welcomes initiatives through which Afghans sit down with other Afghans in pursuit of that goal."

The Afghan embassy did not respond to a request to discuss the plan.

"By 2015, Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami and other armed groups will have given up armed opposition, transformed from military entities into political parties, and are actively participating in the country's political and constitutional processes, including national elections," says the plan's preamble. "NATO/ISAF forces will have departed from Afghan-

istan, leaving the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) as the only legitimate armed forces delivering security and protection to the Afghan population."

Despite that optimistic forecast, however, the plan may rest on shaky legs. Its far-reaching assumptions not only could doom it to failure, but risk an all-out civil war before the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF, completes its pullout.

"This is living in a dream world of wishful thinking," said Marvin Weinbaum, a Middle East Institute scholar who served as a State Department intelligence analyst on Afghanistan. "It is not based on anything that the Taliban has given us reason to expect."

A major assumption is that all insurgent leaders and their fighters will participate even though the Taliban have consistently rejected negotiations with Karzai, who they denounce as an American puppet. Moreover, the insurgency is far from being monolithic and many leaders are known to distrust each other and Pakistan.

Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar and other leaders based in Pakistan could come under pressure from the Pakistani military to take part if they balk. But such pressure could backfire, risking Afghan militants joining Pakistani Islamists fighting to topple their government.

In an incident underscoring the hurdles, two Taliban factions claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack on Thursday that wounded Asadullah Khalid, the chief of Afghanistan's intelligence service. Karzai on Saturday alleged that the attack was planned in Pakistan, but he denied that the Taliban were responsible.

The new plan would preserve Afghanistan as a parliamentary democracy, denying the militants the Islamic rule for which they've spent years fighting.

It also appears to ignore warnings from politicians of the former Northern Alliance against giving the Taliban and their allies power that they hadn't won in elections. The Northern Alliance, dominated by ethnic minorities, battled the Taliban, which is made up primarily of the dominant Pashtun ethnic group, until the 2001 U.S. invasion. Many former alliance members now head Karzai's political opposition and hold key army, police and intelligence posts.

"Any Afghanistan reconciliation effort will have to address varied and complex ethnic concerns," acknowledged a U.S. official, who requested anonymity in order to discuss the issue.

Finally, the key role that the plan confers on Pakistan could inflame suspicion among many Afghans that Islamabad plans to exert influence in a post-war Afghanistan—especially to block a pro-India tilt—by placing former insurgents in cabinet posts, ministries, provincial governorships and positions like police chiefs and district administrators.

"The northerners won't buy this," said Weinbaum, referring to former Northern Alliance leaders. "So what you get then is the beginning of a civil war."

Pakistan is widely despised in Afghanistan, particularly by minorities who dominate the country's north, because of its sponsorship of the Taliban's bloody nationwide takeover in the mid-1990s and the support and sanctuary that they and other insurgents allegedly still receive from the Pakistani army and the army-run Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, or ISI.

In principles governing the new peace process, the plan reiterates Afghan and U.S. demands that the Taliban and other insurgents cut ties with al Qaeda and renounce violence.

But in a shift that could raise concerns among human rights and women's groups, the plan changes what had been a demand for

the insurgents to “accept” the Afghan Constitution to one that they “respect” it.

“Any outcome of the peace process must respect the Afghan Constitution and must not jeopardize the rights and freedoms that the citizens of Afghanistan, both men and women, enjoy under the Constitution,” the plan says.

The plan comprises five steps. The first step, which now appears underway, calls for Pakistan to end cross-border shelling of Afghan villages and to free Taliban detainees. Nine were released last month after Rabbani’s visit, and Pakistan has agreed to free more.

In the first half of 2013, Afghan, U.S. and Pakistani officials are to agree on terms for removing Taliban leaders “willing to engage in peace talks” from a U.N. terrorism list and giving them safe passage. Pakistan would “facilitate direct contact” between Afghan officials “and identified leaders of the Taliban and other armed opposition groups.”

Afghan, Pakistani and U.S. officials would “explore and agree to terms for initiating direct peace talks” between the sides “with a focus on Saudi Arabia as the venue.”

The negotiations would begin in the second half of 2013 “preferably through one consistent and coherent channel, with the aim of securing agreements on priority issues, such as ending violence, allowing space for the provision of basic public services, e.g. education, humanitarian aid, and security in the conduct of the upcoming elections,” the plan says.

The sides would agree to a ceasefire and terms for the release of Taliban prisoners by the government “in return for their agreement to disengage and renounce violence.”

The sides also would “reach an understanding on issues related to security and the withdrawal of international forces,” and agree on rules for the insurgents’ participation in 2014 provincial council and 2015 parliamentary elections.

Another provision would confer considerable political power on the insurgents by allowing them to become cabinet members, provincial governors, district administrators, police chiefs and other key officials.

“The negotiating parties to agree on modalities for the inclusion of Taliban and other armed opposition leaders in the power structure of the state, to include non-elected positions at different levels with due consideration of legal and governance principles,” the plan says.

That provision, combined with one for an agreement “creating immediate space for education and humanitarian and development aid and public services,” could effectively cede political control of the Taliban’s southern and eastern heartland to the insurgents.

The agreements would be implemented in the first half of 2014, and the final phase, set for the second half of 2014, would be used to build international cooperation on preserving the long-term stability of Afghanistan and the region, the plan says.

Correction: Paragraph 10 of this version has been revised to provide the correct date for the assassination of former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Sgt. Matthew H. Stiltz
Capt. James D. Nehl
Kenneth W. Bennett

PAYING TRIBUTE TO ALABAMA STATE REPRESENTATIVE DR. YVONNE KENNEDY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and pay tribute to the life and legacy of an Alabama State representative, Dr. Yvonne Kennedy, a lawmaker from Mobile, Alabama, who passed away, sadly, on Saturday at the age of 67.

Dr. Kennedy was a pillar in the community and a tremendous public servant. She was the epitome of a servant leader, and she blazed the trails in Alabama politics that so many of us now follow. She led by example and was motivated by a drive and a passion for public service and education.

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I am deeply saddened by her passing and know that her legacy of service will live on.

Yvonne Kennedy was born on January 8, 1945, in Mobile, Alabama, to Leroy and Thelma Kennedy. At a young age, she displayed a commitment to academic excellence, and upon graduating from high school, she earned her bachelor’s degree from Alabama State University, a master’s degree from Morgan State University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Alabama. These early accomplishments were the beginning of an illustrious career both as a lawmaker and a community leader.

First elected to the Alabama State House of Representatives in a special election in 1979, Dr. Kennedy was one of the longest-serving members of the Alabama State legislature. She served the 97th District of Mobile for more than 33 years. She was a prominent lawmaker who fought against Alabama’s egregious voter ID laws, and she also championed the restoration of voter rights for rehabilitated ex-felons. She was the former chair of Alabama’s legislative black caucus and was well respected by her colleagues. Her tireless commitment to public service and her advocacy for quality education in Alabama was unparalleled.

In 1981, Dr. Kennedy became the president of Bishop State Community College in Mobile, Alabama, and she served in that role for over 25 years. Under her leadership, Bishop State expanded from one campus to three campuses, and flourished until her departure in 2007. Dr. Kennedy was a premier educator whose commitment to education knew no bounds.

Dr. Kennedy was a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and was their 19th national President from 1988 to 1992. She served on the boards of the Association of Higher Education, America’s Junior Miss, was

a trustee for Miles College, and she was a longstanding member of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. She was chairwoman of the Mobile County United Negro College Fund and youth director of the Board of Christian Education-Southeast Alabama Conference.

I know that my generation owes Dr. Kennedy a debt of gratitude. I know that my generation stands on the shoulders of trailblazers like Dr. Yvonne Kennedy. It was her light that guided the path that led me to become Alabama’s first African American Congresswoman, and for that I am eternally grateful.

She left an indelible imprint on Alabama and across this Nation, and her legacy will live on. It is indeed a great privilege and an honor that I have today to recognize the legacy and contributions of Dr. Yvonne Kennedy with this tribute on the floor of the House of Representatives. Let her life stand as a testament to the courage and strength of one individual’s ability to shape the lives of so many. On behalf of the Seventh Congressional District and the State of Alabama and a grateful Nation, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Yvonne Kennedy.

THE FISCAL CLIFF

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

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, to understand the Federal budget mess and the so-called fiscal cliff, it’s important to know three numbers: 39, 37, and 64.

Thirty-nine percent is the combined growth of inflation and population over the last 10 years. Thirty-seven percent is the increase in revenues in the same period. That’s despite the recession and the tax cuts. It’s not quite keeping pace, but it’s pretty close. Sixty-four percent is the number that is killing us. Sixty-four percent is the increase in Federal spending in that period. That’s nearly twice the rate of inflation and population growth over the last 10 years.

The spending side of the fiscal cliff is the so-called “sequester,” automatic cuts in Federal spending. To hear some tell it, it is the end of Western civilization as we know it. That’s hardly the case. After a 64 percent increase in expenditures during this decade, the sequester doesn’t actually cut spending at all. It simply limits spending growth next year to about a half of a percent. I opposed the budget deal that created the sequester last year because it fell woefully short of what Standard & Poor’s clearly warned was necessary to preserve the Nation’s AAA credit rating. Sadly, that fear was borne out, but now the sequester is all we have.

It’s true defense takes the brunt of it, but does our defense spending really need to be higher—inflation adjusted—

LIST OF NAMES TO SUBMIT FOR THE RECORD

Sgt. 1st Class Darren M. Linde
Spc. Tyler J. Orgaard
Lance Cpl. Anthony J. Denier
Cpl. Christopher M. Monahan, Jr.
Petty Officer 1st Class Kevin R. Ebbert
Lance Cpl. Dale W. Means
Sgt. Channing B. Hicks
Spc. Joseph A. Richardson
Staff Sgt. Rayvon Battle, Jr.