

At a time when tens of millions of Americans are unemployed and nearly 50 million Americans are living in poverty, the Pentagon is requesting almost \$100 billion in the President's budget to fund Overseas Contingency Operations, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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First of all, we all thought the war in Iraq was really supposed to be over. So why in the world are we spending billions of dollars on a war that we are no longer fighting? Mr. Speaker, we've already spent over \$1.3 trillion on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we cannot afford to blindly continue down this path.

The reason, of course, that I voted against that original resolution in 2001 authorizing the use of military force was because it was a blank check for war against any nation, anywhere, anytime, any organization, and any individual.

The situation we are in right now, being asked to spend another \$100 billion on endless war, is exactly what we should have considered 10 years ago when we went down this path. This war without end must end.

While everyone would like a stable democracy in Afghanistan, the facts on the ground suggest that we are not headed in that direction, yet we've spent hundreds of billions of dollars there. Instead of a stable democracy, we have a corrupt state that relies almost entirely on foreign countries for its budget.

The reality on the ground in Afghanistan stands in stark contrast to the steady reports of progress we have been hearing from those who seek to maintain a military presence in Afghanistan in 2014 and beyond. It's time to bring our troops home from Afghanistan—not in 2014, not next year, but right now.

Later today, some of us will be meeting with the courageous Army officer Colonel Daniel Davis. Colonel Davis wrote a revealing account of the war in Afghanistan after witnessing the huge gap between what the American public was being told about progress in Afghanistan and the dismal situation on the ground.

Colonel Davis' assessment is backed up by a recently released report from Afghanistan's NGO safety officer. The report warns NGO employees in Afghanistan not to take seriously the message of advances in security coming from the Pentagon.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this page from the Afghanistan NGO safety officer quarterly data report be inserted into the RECORD.

AOG INITIATED ATTACKS

AOG initiated attacks grew by 14% over last year and demonstrated an enhanced operational tempo—with 64% of all operations occurring before the end of July (compared to 52% in 2010)—and then trailing off sharply once OP BADR ended over Ramadan.

The tactical portfolio remained consistent with 2010, with close range engagements

(SAF/RPG) making up the bulk of operations (55%) and IED/IDF operations at 44%. Suicide attacks remained at just 1% of the total yet caused close to 70% more fatalities this year, including roughly 400 Afghan civilians (230 in 2010).

Throughout the year ISAF made a number of statements claiming a 3% reduction in attacks between Jan–Aug when compared with 2010. We are not in a position to evaluate their data but, obviously, we do not agree with their finding and advise NGOs to simply ignore it as practical security advice—a use for which it was likely never intended in any case. We find their suggestion that the insurgency is waning to be a dangerous political fiction that should be given no consideration in NGO risk assessment for the coming year.

Interestingly, our data does find that this year's 14% growth rate (what you might call the IEA profit margin) is substantially lower than previous years (above right) suggesting that there has indeed been some serious reduction in the effort that the IEA is putting in. Whether this reduction has been forced upon them by ISAF or whether they consciously chose it—on the calculus that there is no point sprinting to the finish if everyone else has dropped out of the race—is unknown to us and, we suspect, to ISAF.

The report reads:

We find their suggestion that the insurgency is waning to be a dangerous political fiction that should be given no consideration in NGO risk assessment for the coming year.

“A dangerous political fiction”—that is how this organization dedicated to ensure the safety of NGO employees in Afghanistan characterizes the rosy reports of steady progress in Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, if we're going to ask our brave men and women in uniform to continue to risk their lives in Afghanistan, the least we can do is be frank and honest about how we are doing in Afghanistan. Our soldiers deserve to know the truth, and the American people deserve to know the truth after spending the past decade fighting wars.

The war in Afghanistan has already taken the lives of almost 1,900 soldiers and drained our treasury of over \$500 billion in direct costs. Those costs will only go up as we spend trillions of dollars on long-term care for our veterans, which we must do.

We are set to spend an additional \$88 billion in Afghanistan over the next year while domestic cuts in education, health care, roads, bridges, and other essential priorities are sacrificed. Again, I repeat, it is time to bring our troops home from Afghanistan, not in 2014, not next year, but right now.

Let me conclude by saying that as the daughter of a 25-year Army officer who served in two wars, I salute our troops, and I honor our troops. Our service men and women have performed with incredible courage and commitment in Afghanistan. But they have been put in harm's way, and they have performed valiantly. It's time to bring them home.

ALCATRAZ ELEVEN

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

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to American men and women in uniform, but specifically to an era in the Vietnam conflict that I think did not get as much thanks as it deserves.

On February 11, 1965, flying off of the USS Coral Sea, Lieutenant Commander Robert Harper Shumaker, flying an F-8 Crusader, was shot down over North Vietnam. His parachute deployed about 35 feet before he hit the ground. His back was broken upon impact. He was immediately captured and paraded through the streets.

They took him to what became known at that time as the Hoa Lo Prison. This was going to be the main facility that would house POWs over the next several years. This prison was then dubbed by Commander Shumaker as what we know it today, the Hanoi Hilton. This was an area where a number of POWs were tortured on a regular basis. Lieutenant Commander Shumaker was the second American pilot shot down. At that point in time, it was somewhat of a blessing because the news media actually got pictures and was able to send word back to his family that he was, indeed, alive. That same fate would not be given to many other POWs, which is why the POWs spent time each and every day memorizing the names, the ranks, of all of the other 591 POWs that would go through the halls of the Hanoi Hilton.

The Hanoi Hilton wasn't the only prison, however. Eleven members of the United States military were actually taken out of the Hoa Lo Prison and brought over to what would become known as Alcatraz Eleven. These were considered by the North Vietnamese to be the eleven greatest threats to camp security. We had men like Jeremiah Denton, who was a senator from Alabama, Jim Stockdale, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, George Coker, Ron Storz, and I'm pleased to say a Member of this body, SAM JOHNSON.

In Alcatraz, these men spent literally years in solitary confinement in a 3-by-9 foot box with a single lightbulb which was kept on all the time. They were tortured on a regular basis if they were caught communicating. Lieutenant Commander Shumaker was actually known amongst his peers as “the great communicator.”

They'd devised a tap code earlier, the tap code which would become famous for those going through POW training, survival training.

It was a 5-by-5 box. Starting in the top row, A, B, C, D, E—they cut out “K” so they could have an even 5-by-5 box. They would communicate unbelievable volumes of knowledge. Lieutenant Commander Shumaker actually taught French through the walls to SAM JOHNSON.

In that solitary confinement, again, if they were caught communicating, they were tortured, so there was a reluctance to communicate. But that's

how they kept themselves alive. That's how they exercised the one most important muscle out there, and that was their brain.

Just a couple days ago, Mr. Speaker, marked the 39th anniversary of their release, February 12, 1973. So, although we were not here in this body—we were at home—I felt it appropriate to come up and talk about the anniversary.

Lieutenant Commander Shumaker holds a near and dear place in my heart. He happens to be my uncle. When my wife and I had our first child, we decided to name her Harper after him.

This is an example of the bravery that goes on each and every day for our men and women in uniform. Not a day goes by that I don't thank the good Lord for the men and women that are protecting our Nation each and every day. But I don't look at the picture of my uncle upon his capture and say it's never going to be that bad.

The stories are remarkable, and they continue to come in day and day out because they don't like to talk about them. This was a unique group of individuals that the American public was actually in support of. The Vietnam conflict wasn't very supported, but everybody in America was supportive of the POWs that were putting their lives on the line.

They would resist time and again from giving up information, and yet the North Vietnamese would continue to bring them in to try and torture them for additional information.

Mr. Speaker, we are blessed to have countless American heroes amongst us, but I am proudest of my Uncle Bob Shumaker.

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HONORING THE COURAGEOUS PATRIOTISM OF ACTIVE DUTY ARMY OFFICER LIEUTENANT COLONEL DANIEL DAVIS

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, this country has many faces of bravery, and today I want to recognize the courageous patriotism of active duty Army officer Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Davis, who recently returned from a second tour in Afghanistan.

He traveled thousands of miles throughout the country, patrolled with American troops in eight provinces, and spoke to hundreds of Afghan and American security officials and civilians about conditions on the ground.

Convinced that senior leaders of this war, both uniformed and civilian, have intentionally and consistently misled the American people about the conditions in Afghanistan, Davis wrote an 84-page report challenging the military's assertion that the war in Afghanistan has been a success.

This report, which I read, was written at great risk to Lieutenant Colonel

Davis' military career and personal life, and it forces us to confront uncomfortable truths about the war in Afghanistan and about the decision-making that has led us to our current situation.

Davis reports:

Senior-ranking U.S. military leaders have so distorted the truth when communicating with the U.S. Congress and American people in regards to conditions on the ground in Afghanistan that the truth has become unrecognizable.

I strongly encourage every Member of Congress to read this report as soon as possible. It's like the Pentagon papers in its power. After reading it, you will find it impossible not to heed Davis' advice to hold public congressional hearings on the state of the Afghan war.

More than 5,500 Americans were killed or wounded in Afghanistan in 2011 alone. "How many more soldiers," he says, "must die in support of a mission that is not succeeding?" That is his question. Each and every one of us ought to ask himself or herself this difficult question. Even our intelligence agencies are skeptical about the Afghan war—if it is salvageable and if our objectives are realistic.

Last month, a National Intelligence Estimate given to President Obama painted a bleak picture about our efforts in Afghanistan. At current levels of foreign assistance by the U.S. and Europe, which will be hard to sustain under the budgetary pressures, the NIE does not forecast rapid improvements in Afghan security forces or governance or in the removal of the Taliban.

I fear that we have forgotten the difference between respect for our military leaders and unquestioning deference to them. Questioning the war's strategies and objectives and consequences all too often discredits one's patriotism and impugns one's motives. Yet that unflinching assessment is precisely what the lieutenant colonel implores us to do.

After 10 years in Afghanistan, what is the wisest course for us now?

Sadly, we cannot even begin to answer that question because the rampant over-classification of information has made it nearly impossible for Congress to fully oversee, evaluate and to, perhaps, recast our war efforts.

Recently, declassified information about the Afghan war exposed brutal realities that have been withheld from the public—American troops incidentally and accidentally killing Afghan civilians, widespread corruption in the U.S.-backed Karzai government and revelations about Pakistan's assistance to Afghan insurgents, to name just a few.

Not every American has traveled 9,000 miles and witnessed what Lieutenant Colonel Davis has seen, heard, and understood; but we can in this body, and must, begin to investigate the charges of deception and dishonesty in his report. For our democracy to work, congressional officials and the

public must have access to this type of information.

The American public, which bears the extraordinary cost of this war both in money and in pain, deserves to know the truth. The ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus cautioned: "In war, truth is the first casualty."

It is time to reclaim the truth of our war in Afghanistan by having congressional hearings. They should begin now. Some of us believe we ought to bring the troops home more quickly than the President, but we have to have hearings so that the American public will understand why it is this action should be taken.

THE DANNY THOMAS COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

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

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the life and work of Danny Thomas and of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which is located in Memphis, Tennessee.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of St. Jude's hospital and what would have been the 100th birthday of Danny Thomas. Commemorative postage stamps are one of the most visible and enduring ways that our Nation honors organizations and people. Today, the United States Postal Service will be celebrating the life and work of Danny Thomas with the commemorative stamp in my district of Memphis, Tennessee, at the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Danny Thomas was born on January 6, 1912, in Deerfield, Michigan. After saving enough money, he moved to Detroit to take up a show business career. One of his first jobs was on a radio show called "The Happy Hour Club," which is where he met his wife, Rose Marie Mantell. He met her on the show, and he escorted her home for 3 years, traveling together on a streetcar. Finally, he proposed. They were married in 1936, and they had three children whom the world pretty much knows—Marlo, Tony, and Terre.

When Rose Marie was about to give birth to their first child, Marlo, Danny Thomas was torn between his dedication to work and his responsibilities to his wife and his newborn daughter. Desperately, he sought relief in prayer. He knelt before the statue of St. Jude, the patron saint of hopeless causes, and begged for a sign. Should he or should he not remain in show business? He promised that if St. Jude showed him the way he would erect a shrine in his honor.

Danny went on to become one of the best loved entertainers of his era, starring in many TV shows and movies. From '53 to '64, he received five Emmy nominations for a starring role in "Make Room for Daddy," winning Best Actor Starring in a Regular Series in '53 and '54. The show also received an Emmy for Best New Situation Comedy