

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.

□ 1110

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

in '53 and Best Situation Comedy in '54. He also produced comedy programs: "The Dick Van Dyke Show," "The Andy Griffith Show," "The Real McCoys," and "The Mod Squad."

Yet he never forgot his promise to build a shrine to St. Jude. He had conversations with his close friend and mentor, a native of Tennessee and archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Samuel Stritch. Cardinal Stritch was the cardinal in Toledo when Danny Thomas was in church, and they became close. Cardinal Stritch, who served time in Memphis at St. Patrick's church after he was in Nashville, which was his home, told Danny that the shrine to St. Jude should be a hospital where children should be cared for regardless of race, religion, or ability to pay. He told him that the hospital should be in Memphis, Tennessee.

Cardinal Stritch was a great man for many, many reasons, but this was one of them—the creation of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital with Danny Thomas. The hospital, located in Memphis, is one of the world's premier centers for research and treatment of pediatric cancer and for other catastrophic children's diseases. It is the first and only pediatric cancer center to be designated as a comprehensive cancer center by the National Cancer Institute.

Children throughout the United States and from around the world come to Memphis and in through the doors of St. Jude for treatment. Thousands more have benefited from its research, which is shared freely with the world global community. No child is denied treatment because of an inability to pay. The hospital has developed procedures that have pushed the survival rate for childhood cancers from less than 20 percent when the hospital opened to 80 percent today. By U.S. News and World Report, it ranks as the number one children's cancer hospital in the United States. It was the first completely integrated hospital in the South, a condition demanded by both Danny Thomas and Cardinal Stritch. Black doctors treated white patients, and white and black patients were together in the same rooms.

As one of Memphis' largest employers, St. Jude has more than 3,600 employees, supported by a full-time fundraising staff of almost 900 at ALSAC, which is the American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities. The Shadiac family has a great history in running that charity. ALSAC/St. Jude, the fundraising organization of St. Jude, is the third largest health care charity in America, and it raises money solely to support St. Jude.

□ 1120

Danny Thomas was presented with a Congressional Gold Medal in 1983 by President Reagan in recognition for his work with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. He died in 1991 at the age of 79. His great accomplishments and altruism make him an American hero

worthy of the honor a commemorative stamp imparts. His life perfectly illustrates how the American Dream can be within the reach of anyone, even an immigrant son of Lebanese parents with a humble upbringing.

Mr. Thomas was an extremely compassionate man who certainly deserves nationwide recognition for his dedication to St. Jude and all the children that the hospital has helped over these 50 years. To this day, Danny Thomas is still a part of every child's experience at St. Jude. Children rub the nose of Danny's statue for good luck prior to every treatment, sure proof that he will always be a source of hope and inspiration.

I was pleased to support this effort by leading a letter to Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, and I commend the United States Postal Service for selecting Danny Thomas.

I urge everyone to contribute and to visit the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. I congratulate St. Jude and the family of Danny Thomas for this honor and for all that they do for children of the world.

AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN

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

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, President Obama's decision to end combat operations in Afghanistan next year is welcome news. I commend President Obama for making this decision. But we should bring our troops home even sooner than that.

The American people are tired of this war in Afghanistan. Large majorities of them want a safe and orderly withdrawal from Afghanistan as soon as possible. A decade of war has ravaged military families, our Nation's treasury, and our standing in the world.

I commend President Obama for ending the war in Iraq as well. I commend him for trying to end the war in Afghanistan. The courageous truth telling of Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Davis should give us pause. His report and the failure to establish peace in Afghanistan after 10 years of war should remind us that we need a political solution, not a military one.

We have ended the war in Iraq. This is a good thing. We are slowly ending the war in Afghanistan. This is also welcome news. But I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it would be unwise for the United States to enter into a new war just as we're ending two others.

But if you listen to the rhetoric around Washington and the Nation, Mr. Speaker, it is literally impossible to not hear the drumbeat of war with Iran. The rhetoric in Washington about the military strike against Iran leads me to think that we may be sliding into a new war yet.

I would like to be perfectly clear, because whenever you speak against a war, your patriotism is challenged and

your courage is challenged until they find out that you were right. So let me be clear:

I strongly oppose nuclear proliferation, and that includes Iran. I have supported sanctions against Iran to help prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Iran's repression of human rights and support for terrorist groups is appalling.

But the heated rhetoric we hear around our city and the events on the world stage are deeply troubling, Mr. Speaker. News headlines read, "The Coming Attack on Iran." Pundits discuss the possibility with shocking casualness, and I am alarmed by this.

America, we have seen this movie before, and, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't end well. Two months after leaving Iraq, we have already forgotten the consequences of war it appears. If you need a reminder, talk to a veteran or a veteran's widow.

Our military leaders are cautioning against a strike on Iran. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said the United States "could possibly be the target of retaliation from Iran, sinking our ships, striking our military bases." He said, "That would not only involve many lives, but I think could consume the Middle East in a confrontation and a conflict that we would regret." Let me repeat, "a conflict that we would regret."

Mr. Speaker, I wish the United States had never entered Iraq. And before we entered it, the world—not just Americans, but the world—said, "Don't do it." Some people led us to war anyway; and haven't we all regretted—after no weapons of mass destruction, no linkage between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden—that none of these things that were recommended have come to pass, yet we've lost, literally, thousands of American lives and perhaps \$1 trillion.

Israeli intelligence officials have equally dire predictions about a military strike against Iran. Former Israeli Mossad Chief Meir Dagan said that attacking Iran "would mean regional war, and in that case, you would have given Iran the best possible reason to continue the nuclear program."

There is serious concern that a military strike on Iran would hasten Iran's development of a nuclear weapon, not slow it down. A strike would only delay—not end—development. Speaking about what would happen after a military strike, retired General Anthony Zinni said, "If you follow this all the way down, eventually I'm putting boots on the ground somewhere."

America cannot afford another war. We've just gotten out of Iraq. We're getting out of Afghanistan. And diplomacy, diplomacy, diplomacy is what is called for to avoid a new war with Iran.

CONSTITUENT IDEAS

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