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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, 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.

AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I continue to be disappointed in the House leadership in that we are not looking into this issue of the CIA giving tens of millions of dollars to Karzai, the corrupt leader of Afghanistan. We don't hold any hearings about it, we're spending money there, and kids are still dying. In fact, we had four American soldiers killed yesterday in Afghanistan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator CORKER from Tennessee for taking the lead on Monday and writing a letter to the Secretary of State, John Kerry, and demanding an explanation of the secret payments by the CIA. I fully agree with the Senator's decision to place a hold on U.S. funding for Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, we're still having kids killed in Afghanistan, severely wounded, and yet there is no full debate on the floor of the House. That to me is a tragedy. We should be debating the issue of Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, to make things worse, yesterday in The New York Times,

Karzai's office made the following statement:

In view of the contradictions between acts and statements made by the United States of America in regard to the peace process, the Afghan Government suspended negotiations currently under way in Kabul between Afghan and the U.S. delegations, on the bilateral security agreement.

Mr. Speaker, it would be my wish that we would just totally scrap the bilateral security agreement. That means that America would be there for 10 more years after 2014 with a semblance of a military presence and also spending money that we don't have. This is just another failed policy that we in the Congress continue to support.

Karzai will not last as the leader of Afghanistan. What will happen is the Taliban will eventually take over. They are the Pashtuns that make up the majority of the Taliban. They are the largest tribe in Afghanistan, and they will eventually lead Afghanistan.

I do not understand why the Taliban that we're fighting today, who will probably be the leaders in the next 2 or 3 years of Afghanistan, why we're going to support them with finances and with young men and women. There's something wrong here, and I hope that the House of Representatives, the leadership in both parties, will come together and say we're going to debate the policy in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, this cartoon that I have that I've been handing out in a flyer to members in my district, it's got Mr. Karzai standing in front of a CIA ATM machine. He's got a little card. I guess it's paid for by Uncle Sam. He's taking money out, and you can see bags of cash at his feet. Karzai says: "I'm just making a quick withdrawal." But the sad thing about it is that a soldier standing behind him says: "I would like to make a quick withdrawal from Afghanistan."

I hope the American people will put pressure on the House and Senate to stop spending money we don't have in

Afghanistan if for no other reason than to save the lives of our young men and women who are dying over there each and every week. And I will continue to ask how a Nation that is financially broke can continue to pay a corrupt leader to stay in power when he criticizes us in the paper almost every other week.

It's time for Congress to meet its responsibility based on the Constitution and have a debate on this war in Afghanistan.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I ask God in His loving arms to hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. I ask God to bless the House and the Senate, that we will do what is right in the eyes of God. I ask God to please bless the President, that he will do what is right in the eyes of God. And I close three times by saying God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

SNAP

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

Mr. DEFazio. Last week I went shopping. I wouldn't exactly call it a spree. What I did was I went to one of the lowest cost grocery stores in the Eugene-Springfield area where I live to try and purchase a week's worth of food for \$31.50. That's the average SNAP benefit for a single individual.

There are those on the other side of the aisle with regard to the FARRM Bill that will come up later today and say, This is the first place to cut: food assistance to hungry people, to kids, to seniors, to the unemployed, the disabled. That's where they want to cut first.

□ 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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I wonder how many of them have ever tried to budget for themselves or for their spouse and child at \$31.50 per person for a week. It doesn't go too far. In fact, I ended up a little bit over because we miscalculated on weighing some apples. I had three apples, but I had to put one back and would have had to cut back a little bit more on the pasta to make the \$31.50 budget limit.

There are these incredible stereotypes out there about the SNAP program, the food assistance program formerly called food stamps, that all these people are on welfare. No. Actually, 92 percent of the people getting SNAP benefits are not on welfare. Half of them are children and 22 percent are on Social Security or Social Security Disability. So they're either seniors or disabled. The rest are unemployed or underemployed. And at \$31.50 a week—a benefit that the other side of the aisle wants to cut—many of these people now can't make it through the month. This is pretty paltry stuff if you look at it and you think about doing this week in and week out.

Most people in Oregon—and Oregon is a lower cost State than many for food—run out sometimes in the third week of their benefits and they have to get emergency food assistance. Our food banks provided 1 million boxes of emergency food assistance last year. Yet, those on that side of the aisle would begrudge these people, their children, these seniors, these disabled an adequate budget for a very minimal diet.

□ 1010

It's extraordinary to me.

My State—and most people don't think of us this way—we are the fourth highest per capita in terms of food stamp utilization. Fourth highest per capita, because outside of our major urban areas, the economy has not recovered from the collapse that Wall Street caused in housing and other areas. We had recreational vehicles; that industry is gone. We had some high tech; that's moved on. We had a lot of construction, home building, wood products—pretty well decimated. The rural areas I have in my rural counties—real unemployment of 20 percent. People are struggling to make ends meet, and we're going to cut their benefits? They want to work. Some of them are working, and we even have a higher minimum wage than most States, but it still won't get you through to the end of the month for your family. This is just outrageous.

There are ways to cut this bill. We're going to stop paying—finally, at last, we're going to stop paying people not to grow things. But now we're going to have a new program of crop insurance. And some estimates are that this program—which goes to anybody with an unlimited income in this bill, that is, if you're a corporate farm and you earn \$2 million a year, the government is going to pay for 80 percent of your crop insurance cost. Eighty percent subsidy from the taxpayers. Why is that?

We could cut back on the eligibility, and this would be a pretty big income for any farmer I know of. If you earn over a quarter-million dollars a year, go buy your own crop insurance. I think it even could be a little lower than that in my State and in most States. That would save as much money as they're going to save by eliminating food assistance to hungry kids, seniors, unemployed and underemployed, and disabled Americans. These are the cruelest cuts possible.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment later today which would restore these benefits.

U.S. ARMS SYRIAN REBELS

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, there is a war going on in Syria. Some call it a civil war. It may have started out as a civil war, but it has escalated. The Government of Syria, is ruled by the dictator Assad. He's a bad guy; no question about it. Several rebel groups, and we're still not sure who all these people are, are trying to remove him from power. World powers seem to be taking sides in this battle.

You have the Syrian Government supported by Iran and Russia. There's also this little terrorist group called Hezbollah supporting the regime. But on the other side, you've got the rebels, numerous groups, including al Qaeda, a terrorist group. You've got Saudi Arabia; Qatar; you've got the Muslim Brotherhood from Egypt supporting the rebels. Turkey is concerned, and even Great Britain has weighed in on this, a former colonial power in the region. And so more and more groups and nations are lining up in this war in Syria that's been going on for 2 years; 100,000 people have been killed by both sides. Refugees are leaving the country and going to other countries.

I recently was in Turkey on the border of Turkey and Syria, and I saw a refugee camp that had 150,000 Syrians that had escaped the war in Syria. No question the U.S. should help with humanitarian aid.

And finally now the United States, after 2 years, we've decided we're going to take sides. The President has said we're going to give arms to the Syrian rebels and that they're going to be vetted so we make sure that we're not giving those to other terrorist groups. I don't know if we're going to do a universal background check on the rebels, or what; but small arms for the rebels? Here's what the President said:

We're not taking sides in this religious war between Shia and Sunni. Really, what we are trying to do is take sides against extremists of all sorts.

Well, it seems to me what we are really doing is taking both sides and we're arming extremists at least on one side. And I ask the question: What is the national security interest of the United States to be involved in some-

body else's war? There isn't one. We don't have a national security interest to be involved in this war. The United States seems to have a habit of getting involved in other people's business; and once again, we have made the problem in Syria our problem by being involved and supporting the rebel groups.

What is the goal of the United States's involvement? This war is not going to be easily won by the rebels. Are we going to then add more military power to the rebels? What's the end game? What is the goal here, to put another rebel group in power in another country?

You know, we've kind of forgotten what we did in Libya. There's Muammar Qadhafi, the bad guy of Libya. No question about it, a horrible person. So what does the United States do? We support the rebels who overthrow the Libyan President, the Libyan dictator. We sent small arms. And you know, Mr. Speaker, those small arms are still in North Africa, and they've spread all over North Africa. We don't know what has happened to those weapons that the United States gave to those rebels. Only time will tell.

So this is not our war; yet we seem to be very interested in supporting this, as the President correctly said, a religious war. You've got the Shia's and you've got the Sunnis. They've been at each other since the year 630, and they haven't resolved their conflicts and yet here a century and a half later, another conflict is involved. It's a religious war between two groups in the Middle East. It is escalating. The United States' national interest is not at stake. What the United States should do and work toward is a political solution to this problem, not a military solution to this problem, and do what we can to resolve it politically and help really both sides resolve it.

This is not our war, Mr. Speaker. We have no national security interest. There's no American goal. We don't know the goal. We don't know the end result, and we don't even know who we are arming as those rebels. They could be made up of criminals, patriots, al Qaeda. We ought not be involved in this war that has no national security interest for the United States.

And that's just the way it is.

IN SUPPORT OF SUGAR REFORM

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

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express support for the Pitts-Davis-Goodlatte-Blumenauer amendment to the agriculture bill. Our amendment to H.R. 1947, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013, will not repeal the sugar program; it only seeks to reform it. We have farm programs for wheat, corn, cotton, and many other crops. These programs give direct assistance to farmers and allow market prices to