

their basic human rights. But the regime isn't just a threat to the people of Cuba. They also operate within the United States, with sophisticated espionage, tradecraft, and are allies of our worst enemies.

We have but to remember the story of Ana Belen Montes. A senior analyst in our Defense Intelligence Agency, Ana Belen Montes was one of the masterminds of Cuba intelligence in the U.S. She was the top spy for the Castro regime and undermined U.S. foreign policy efforts throughout the world due to her nefarious espionage activities. She is certainly serving a long sentence in Texas.

But Castro also harbors fugitives from U.S. law, such as Joanne Chesimard. She is a New Jersey cop killer and earned the terrible distinction of being the first woman on the FBI's most wanted list of terrorists.

In 2001, Fidel Castro went to Iran and met with Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei, and Castro said at that time: Together, Cuba and Iran will bring America to its knees.

These are just a few of the examples of why it is imperative for the Obama administration to get tough with Castro, not only to protect our U.S. national security interests, but also to extend a helpful hand to the pro-democracy leaders on the island who are struggling for freedom.

The Cuban regime continues to repress independent journalists, human rights activists, and commits arbitrary detentions every day, all to thwart any attempt at the exercise of freedom of expression. I will show you just a few of the names and faces of the voices of those opposition leaders in the push for freedom on the island, and each deserves the attention of this body.

Mr. Speaker, this is Berta Soler. Berta Soler is the leader of a movement called Ladies in White, Las Damas de Blanco, a group of women tirelessly advocating for the release of political prisoners in Cuba. These courageous women walk to mass peacefully holding up flowers and are met with brutal attacks by Castro's state security. Berta Soler became the leader of this organization after the death of her predecessor, Laura Pollan.

Laura Pollan started this movement in Cuba. She died under mysterious causes in October 2011. Many people in the island and outside have blamed the Castro regime for the unfortunate and suspicious circumstances of her passing.

We also have many pro-democracy leaders who are still languishing in Cuban jails, and these are some of their faces. This first young man, his name is Angel Yunier Remon. He is also known as El Critico. He is another face of repression on the island. Angel was arrested in March for criticizing the Castro regime's brutal human rights abuses and the oppression of 11 million of his fellow countrymen. To this day, El Critico remains in prison for the mere crime of simply expressing his

right to address grievances through rhyme.

Then there is the face of Sonia Garro. Sonia is another member of the Ladies in White. Sonia and her husband were arrested 2 years ago in a violent raid. Her trial has been suspended four times without an explanation or any reason being given.

Along with Sonia, fighting for the causes of freedom and liberty is this young man, Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, better known as Antunez, who has been in prison in Castro's gulag for nearly 17 years. Antunez and his wife, Yris, have repeatedly been assaulted and beaten by state security forces, and their scars tell a story of resilience and commitment to the cause of freedom on the island. They are free now, but one does not know for how long.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, there is the case of Juan Carlos Gonzalez, another freedom fighter I would like to highlight. He is a lawyer who is blind. He has spent years defending the human rights of the Cuban people.

These are just a few of the faces of the pro-human rights activists in Cuba, Mr. Speaker. I could not possibly cover the face of every single dissident on the island, but these faces are representative of the horrors of the Cuban regime and the horrors that liberty fighters face there every day; and that is why, Mr. Speaker, it is our moral obligation to stand in solidarity with these pro-democracy activists and to be a voice for 11 million people who are being oppressed and silenced in Cuba.

PAUL SIMON WATER FOR THE WORLD ACT

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, by unanimous consent motion offered by my friend, and the bill's Republican lead, TED POE, the House passed H.R. 2901, our Paul Simon Water for the World Act. It was almost anticlimactic, considering all the ins and outs it has taken for years to be able to hammer out the details necessary to take the next step in reform.

The hard work was all worth it, enhancing our efforts to have the United States embrace its responsibility to help the world deal with our water and sanitation crisis. Make no mistake about it; it is a crisis.

Today 152 million hours will be spent by women and girls to get water—often dirty, polluted water—to meet the basic needs of their families. Almost three-quarter billion people still lack access to this fundamental necessity of life.

There is an even greater crisis with inadequate sanitation. There are approximately 2.5 billion people who suffer from this lack of what most of us take for granted. It results in horrific disease, stunted growth, and malnutrition. In fact, the children under 5 who

are malnourished in India are suffering less from a lack of food and more from the diseases produced by poor sanitation. The children who do survive are left with mental and physical burdens for their entire life.

In a world where there are more cell phones than toilets, this is something that we can do something about. It is seriously out of kilter. The world knows what to do, and we can afford a solution. The enactment of the Water for the World legislation moves us in that direction by focusing the United States' efforts on things that will work, areas of the world most in need, and making sure our solutions are sustainable.

I deeply appreciate the leadership of my friend, colleague, and principle cosponsor of the bill, TED POE, who has been tireless in his efforts; the work of Chairman ROYCE and the Foreign Affairs Committee; our partners in the other body, Senators DICK DURBIN and BOB CORKER; and, of course, dozens of nongovernmental organizations that have been at work around the globe making progress while they have been unrelenting advocates here at home.

I must also acknowledge the tireless efforts of my legislative director, Michael Harold, who has done as much as any human alive to get this across the finish line.

Mr. Speaker, this is an amazing and important accomplishment, but it makes me pause. What else could we do in the spirit of bipartisan cooperation and doing what is right?

Might it be possible to take a small step, show a little courage, and embrace what Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill could do over 30 years ago? President Reagan used his radio address on Thanksgiving 1982 to provide leadership to more than double the gas tax, which he correctly pointed out was really a user fee and which had not increased in 23 years while roads were falling apart.

Well, the current gas tax has not been increased in almost 22 years, and America is falling apart and falling behind. The highway trust fund is going bankrupt. Everyone acknowledges an increase is long overdue. With gasoline prices falling dramatically, seemingly every week, and expected to continue doing so well into the foreseeable future, a nickel a gallon per year is hardly going to be noticed.

But as President Reagan pointed out, people will directly benefit. Today poor road maintenance costs the typical family \$377 per year in damage to their cars, far more than they would pay in a small increase in the gas tax. Millions of hours and billions of dollars are wasted due to highway congestion.

So let's square our shoulders. Let's show some backbone and vision and take another step forward. Let's raise the user fee we call the gas tax, put hundreds of thousands of people to work all across America at family wage jobs, and renew and rebuild this great country. This would be a nice

Christmas present that Americans will enjoy for years to come.

THE NDAA AND MILITARY BENEFITS

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, let me quote from Roger Simon in a recent article, titled, "Down the Opium Rathole." Mr. Simon writes about Afghanistan:

If you spent 13 years pounding money down a rathole with little to show for it, you might wake up one morning and say, "Hey, I'm going to stop pounding money down the rathole." Unfortunately, the United States Government does not think this way.

Mr. Speaker, last week we passed a \$585 billion bill known as the defense bill, with a large percentage of that money going into overseas contingencies: Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. I question how much damage this bill causes our military Active Duty and our retirees.

Let me quote from Lori Falkner Volkman, a former prosecutor and spokesman for the Keep Your Promise Alliance, an online coalition of military families and organizations. She said: "This is the second Christmas in a row that national leaders have tried to cut military pay benefits. Earned benefits should not even be on the table when entitlement budgets soar and appropriations budgets are billions of dollars over budget."

I did not vote for the NDAA bill. It was 1,648 pages, and we did not have enough time to read and comprehend the contents of the bill. In a recent article in the Jacksonville Daily News regarding my "no" vote on this bill, Mike Hayden, a retired Air Force colonel and present director of governmental relations for the Military Officers Association of America, known as MOAA, said: "An E-5 servicemember would lose more than \$800 in purchasing power annually when the bill takes effect. This is going to cost them a loss of about \$600 a month just in pay."

In the same article, Jim Davis, a retired marine who now lives in Jacksonville and serves as a senior vice commander of the local DAV chapter, said the cuts could adversely affect military families.

Charlie Brown, a quartermaster for the VFW post in Jacksonville, agreed with Mr. Davis and said the bill doesn't accurately reflect what servicemembers actually deserve.

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Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote James Madison. James Madison wrote: "The power to declare war, including the power to judge the causes of war, is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature."

Mr. Speaker, for too long, we have not had policy debates on the floor of

this House, whether it be Iraq, Syria, or Afghanistan. When I look at the waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan, I want to say to the Active Duty in the military and the retirees, I regret so much that the Congress is not debating the issues that we should be debating based on our constitutional duties.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to quote Pat Buchanan. Pat says: "Is it not a symptom of senility to be borrowing from the world so we can defend the world?" I repeat: "Is it not a symptom of senility to be borrowing from the world so we can defend the world?" Mr. Speaker, that is so prophetic. And I thank Pat Buchanan for trying to wake up Congress before it is too late.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have a poster beside me with Uncle Sam. And Uncle Sam says: "I want you to understand that if you can't afford to take care of your veterans, you can't afford to go to war." That, again, is what Pat Buchanan is saying.

Mr. Speaker, those of us in Congress in both parties need to understand that we have a constitutional responsibility to not commit our young men and women to fight and die and be wounded unless we debate the policy on the floor of the House.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform and their families, and please, God, continue to bless America.

EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, equal justice under the law—impartial and uniformly applied—has been, for more than two centuries, the ideological underpinning of American democracy.

But from the very beginning, this noblest aspiration has been intertwined with our struggle with race, a battle that has sometimes come to define our Nation and to divide it in ways that too often cleave us still today.

Mr. Speaker, 150 years since the Emancipation Proclamation and half a century after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 formally ended Jim Crow, our President, his Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the National Security Adviser are all African American.

Blacks are now prominent in every facet of American life. But much of this has occurred during my lifetime because people marched and sat and voted and demanded greater equality.

Yet despite the progress, equal justice under law is not the reality for too many of our fellow citizens, and injustice continues to limit their lives and their livelihoods in ways that are difficult for many White Americans to comprehend.

Inequality manifests itself at every rung of the criminal justice system, but its most deadly consequences are to be found in the encounters of young men of color with the police.

I have seen the video of Eric Garner in New York and watched the tragedy in Ferguson in the aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown. The agony of those families and the anger of their communities have rightfully moved the Nation.

Sadly, they are not alone. The deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown grabbed national headlines, but decades of strife between police and many poor and minority neighborhoods have resulted in an endemic mistrust of law enforcement there.

One need only consider a phenomenon almost completely foreign to much of America, "the talk." It is a ritual that plays out in Black and Brown households across our Nation every day as parents teach their young children about the special dangers they face from law enforcement.

As a father, to hear that is heart-breaking. As someone who has long worked with and on behalf of law enforcement and who has deep respect for the bravery and integrity of so many who wear the uniform, it is a call to action.

First, in the months since the Michael Brown shooting, I have pressed for greater deployment of body-worn cameras to police departments across the country, an idea that the President has now endorsed. Cameras are not a panacea, but they are a first step on a path to greater accountability and transparency.

Second, since cameras alone will not bridge the chasm of mistrust between many communities of color and the police there to protect them, we must invest in 21st century police departments.

Effective policing requires mutual respect between the public and the police and a renewed emphasis on community policing strategies. Diversifying police forces so that they are more reflective of the communities they patrol and improving the training of officers to reduce the likelihood of violent confrontations are essential. This cannot be accomplished overnight, however, and generations of injustice have left deep scars.

So the third leg of any law enforcement reform agenda must be enhanced oversight by the Department of Justice, which has a long record of working with State and local police agencies to modernize and improve practices and behavior.

Justice Department intervention, as in the recent release of a report detailing excessive use of force by Cleveland Police, can be instrumental in overcoming opposition to reform. And I know that Attorney General Holder's successor will make this a priority.

We ask a lot from our police, who have a difficult and often dangerous job, and we grant them enormous power, including the right to take a life under certain circumstances. It is not only proper that we insist this power is used impartially and as a last resort. It is fundamental to a just society.