

stamps or education or roads and bridges in order to fund the Veterans' Administration. When this Congress voted to go to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, it said that it was an emergency. Some of us disagreed with that, and I don't want to debate the Iraq war again, but when Congress said it is an emergency that we go to war, well, if it is an emergency that we go to war, it is more of an emergency that we take care of the men and women who fought in those wars. If you don't believe that is the case, don't send Americans off to war. Taking care of veterans is a cost of war.

I hope very much that we don't go back to the same old, same old of having a debate where some people say: Well, if you want to fund VA health care, you are going to have to cut education or cut Medicaid or cut Medicare or cut some other program. That is not the issue. This is an emergency. Our veterans have put their lives on the line. Now is the time for us to defend them, and we have to get this legislation moving.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Texas.

ISRAELI KIDNAPPING

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to talk about three young boys—three young boys who are now in the hands of terrorists. This should be on the front page of every paper in the United States because this is an issue that is as vital to us as it is to the nation of Israel.

On Thursday night, June 12, three Jewish teenagers—Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaar and Eyal Yifrah—were kidnapped. You can see all three of these boys in the photos beside me.

Today, Thursday June 26, marks the 14th day of their abduction. Just imagine if these were your children or any child you know. Just imagine if it were your child who was kidnapped for 14 days and you don't know where they are or even whether they are still alive.

These boys—all smart, hard-working, diligent students—were taken on their way home from school. They were waiting at the bus stop. They were only 5 minutes away from their school—one of the finest yeshivas in Israel. These boys weren't doing anything wrong. They are innocent schoolchildren.

Yet today it has been reported that Israel's Shin Bet identified two key suspects in the abduction. These two individuals are members of Hamas—a vicious terrorist organization that seeks Israel's destruction and has launched thousands of rockets into Israel, killing innocent civilians. These rockets have also killed dozens of Americans in Israel. Now they have kidnapped three school boys. Sadly, this is business as usual for Hamas. This is the same terrorist organization with which the Palestinian Authority recently joined in a so-called "unity" government.

Israel has been tirelessly looking for these two men since the kidnapping. They come from families who have broader ties to Hamas. In a telling statement to the Times of Israel, the mother of one of the two alleged terrorists claims she did not know of her son's actions, but she said she would be "proud of him and hoped he would continue to evade capture." A mother, proud of her son for kidnapping three school boys.

Hamas leader Khaled Mashal spoke about the kidnappings on Monday, saying, "I bless those who did it because it is a moral obligation to free prisoners from Israeli jails." This is a leader of Hamas now parked effectively in the unity government of the Palestinian Authority blessing those who have kidnapped three school boys because this is the kind of activity that Hamas terrorists support, the kidnapping of innocent schoolchildren.

Since the kidnapping, there have been no pictures or videos made available of the kidnapped boys. Their families are in the dark without any knowledge of where their boys are or what conditions they are being held in.

Rachel Fraenkel, the mother of Naftali Fraenkel, spoke before the United Nations Human Rights Council on June 24. Rachel said:

My son texted me—said he's on his way home—and then he's gone. Every mother's nightmare is waiting and waiting endlessly for her child to come home.

She then pleaded for more action to be taken to find the boys, concluding:

We just want them back in our homes, in their beds. We just want to hug them . . .

All of us should stand with Rachel as she stands with her son who has been kidnapped.

I also want to tell the world about these three boys.

Rachel's son Naftali is 16 years old. His grandparents have lived in Brooklyn, and Brooklyn has been a second home to him. He is the oldest of seven children. He likes playing the guitar, basketball, and Ping-Pong. Indeed, there is even a video of him on YouTube playing Ping-Pong. I have to say he is pretty good. He is a talented and gifted student who is on track to take the biology matriculation exams. His teachers say Naftali is brilliant, one of the best they have ever had, and his mother said his personality is a delightful combination of both serious and fun.

Gilad Shaar, who was with Naftali that day—also coming home from school—was likewise abducted. Like Naftali, Gilad is 16 years old. "Gil" means happiness and "ad" means forever. His name literally means "happiness forever," and he is a source of joy to those who meet him.

His aunt Leehy Shaar, whom I had the privilege of meeting and visiting earlier this week, said, "He has a smile that brings light to the world"—quite fitting for a boy named "happiness forever." She said, "We want him home where he belongs, with his family, who so dearly loves him."

Gilad has five sisters, and he is described by them as a caring and loving brother. He is the family's only son, and he has family in Los Angeles and in New York. Gilad is witty. He loves to read, watch movies, and recently he finished a scuba diving course, but he is also a talented cook. He enjoys baking his sisters cakes and pastries.

We don't know where Gilad is right now.

Then there is Eyal Yifrah, the third boy kidnapped that day. He is 19 years old and is the oldest of six children. He is a role model for their family, and he is loved by friends who say they would like to have him as a brother. He loves sports. He should be cheering the World Cup games today—like so many other teenagers—with his friends. A gregarious fellow, he likes to cook, travel, play guitar, and sing. Indeed, you can find videos of him on YouTube singing a song that he himself wrote. Eyal should be home singing again.

There can be no more illusions that Hamas has any role in any future government formed by the Palestinian Authority. They must not receive any further recognition or legitimization. Hamas is a violent terrorist organization ready and eager to brutalize the most innocent. Hamas is a terrorist organization that kidnapped three innocent school boys.

Hamas, give those boys back.

Hamas, give those boys back now.

The full weight of the world should bear down on Hamas to give them back safely and immediately. If they do not, we should use all available means to stand unequivocally with Israel for however long it takes to find these boys and to bring them home. These are teenagers who were targeted for who they are, who have done no wrong, who have done nothing that comes near to deserving what happened to them that day while waiting at the bus stop to go home from school.

It is easy for us to become desensitized to violence, desensitized to terrorism. It is easy for us to forget that these are three teenage boys whose families desperately want their boys back. I ask that all of us lift them up in prayer. I pray for their safe return. I pray they will soon be home with the families who so dearly love them and miss them, and I pray that God will cover them with a shield of heavenly protection. I pray that America will stand strong, will shine a light and do everything possible to apprehend the terrorists and bring these boys home.

Thank you, and God bless you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate as in morning business, and I appreciate the wonderful courtesy of my friend Senator CARL LEVIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

U.S.-INDIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, next week I look forward to traveling to India, where I look forward to meeting with Prime Minister Modi, his national security team, and other Indian leaders. I am excited to be returning to New Delhi, and I am so hopeful about what the Prime Minister's election could mean for the revitalization of India's economy, its rising power, and for the renewal of the U.S.-India strategic partnership.

National elections in India are always a remarkable affair. Over several weeks hundreds of millions of people peacefully elect their leaders—the largest exercise of democracy on the planet. But even by Indian standards, the recent election that brought to power Prime Minister Modi and his party, the BJP, was a landmark event. It was the first time in 30 years that one Indian political party won enough seats to govern without forming a coalition with another party. This gives the Prime Minister a historic mandate for change, which Indians clearly crave.

I want Prime Minister Modi to succeed because I want India to succeed. It is no secret that the past few years have been challenging ones for India—political gridlock, a flagging economy, financial difficulties, and more. It is not my place or that of any other American to tell India how to realize its full potential. That is for the Indians to decide. Our concern is simply that India does realize its full potential, for the United States has a stake in India's success. Indeed, a strong, confident, and future-oriented India is indispensable for a vibrant U.S.-India strategic partnership.

It is also no secret that India and the United States have not been reaching our full potential as strategic partners over the past few years, and there is plenty of blame to be shared on both sides for that. Too often recently we have slipped back into a transactional relationship, one defined more by competitive concession seeking than by achieving shared strategic goals.

We need to lift our sights again. To help us do so, I think we need to remind ourselves why the United States and India embarked on this partnership in the first place. It was never simply about the personalities involved, although the personal commitment of leaders in both countries has been indispensable at every turn. No, the real reason India and the United States have resolved to develop the strategic partnership is because each country has determined independently that doing so is in its national interests.

It is because we have been guided by our national interests that the progress of our partnership has consistently enjoyed bipartisan support in the United States and in India.

This endeavor began with closer cooperation between a Democratic administration in Washington and a BJP-led government in New Delhi. It deep-

ened dramatically during the last decade under a Republican and a Congress-led government. It reached historic heights with the conclusion of our civil nuclear agreement—thanks to the bold leadership of President Bush and Prime Minister Singh. This foundation of shared national interests has sustained our partnership under President Obama, and it is the common ground on which we can build for the future as a new prime minister takes office in New Delhi.

When it comes to the national interests of the United States, the logic of a strategic partnership with India is powerful. India will soon become the world's most populous nation. It has a young, increasingly skilled workforce that can lead India to become one of the world's largest economies. It is a nuclear power and possesses the world's second largest military, which is becoming even more capable and technologically sophisticated. It shares strategic interests with us on issues as diverse and vital as defeating terrorism and extremism, strengthening a rules-based international order in Asia, securing global energy supplies, and sustaining global economic growth.

India and the United States not only share common interests, we also share common values, the values of human rights, individual liberty, and democratic limits on state power, but also the values of our societies—creativity and critical thinking, risk-taking and entrepreneurialism and social mobility—values that continue to deepen the interdependence of our peoples across every field of human endeavor. It is because of these shared values we are confident that India's continued rise as a democratic great power—whether tomorrow or 25 years from now—will be peaceful and thus can advance critical U.S. national interests. That is why, contrary to the old dictates of realpolitik, we seek not to limit India's rise but to bolster and catalyze it—economically, geopolitically, and, yes, militarily.

It is my hope that Prime Minister Modi and his government will recognize how a deeper strategic partnership with the United States serves India's national interests, especially in light of current economic and geopolitical challenges.

For example, a top priority for India is the modernization of its armed forces. This is an area where U.S. defense capabilities, technologies, and cooperation—especially between our defense industries—can benefit India enormously. Similarly, greater bilateral trade and investment can be a key driver of economic growth in India, which seems to be what Indian citizens want most from their new government. Likewise, as India seeks to further its “Look East” policy and deepen its relationships with major like-minded powers in Asia—especially Japan, but also Australia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Vietnam. Those countries are often U.S. al-

lies and partners as well, and our collective ability to work in concert can only magnify India's influence and advance its interests.

Put simply, I see three strategic interests that India and the United States clearly share, and these should be the priorities of a reinvigorated partnership:

First, to shape the development of South Asia as a region of sovereign democratic states that contribute to one another's security and prosperity; second, to create a preponderance of power in the Asia-Pacific region that favors free societies, free markets, free trade, and free comments; and, finally, to strengthen a liberal international order and an open global economy that safeguards human dignity and fosters peaceful development.

As we seek to take our strategic partnership with India to the next level, it is important for U.S. leaders to reach out personally to Prime Minister Modi, especially in light of recent history. That is largely why I am traveling to India next week, and that is why I am pleased President Obama invited the Prime Minister to visit Washington. I wish he had extended that invitation sooner, but it is positive nonetheless. When the Prime Minister comes to Washington, I urge our congressional leaders to invite him to address a joint session of Congress. I can imagine no more compelling scene than the elected leader of the world's largest democracy addressing the elected representatives of the world's oldest democracy.

Yet we must be clear-eyed about those issues that could weaken our strategic partnership. One is Afghanistan. Before it was a safe haven for the terrorists who attacked America on September 11, 2001, Afghanistan was a base of terrorists that targeted India. Our Indian friends remember this well, even if we do not. For this reason I am deeply concerned about the consequences of the President's plan to pull all of our troops out of Afghanistan by 2016, not only for U.S. national security but also for the national security of our friends in India.

If Afghanistan goes the way of Iraq in the absence of U.S. forces, it would leave India with a clear and present danger on its periphery. It would constrain India's rise and its ability to devote resources and attention to shared foreign policy challenges elsewhere in Asia and beyond. It could push India toward deeper cooperation with Russia and Iran in order to manage the threats posed by a deteriorating Afghanistan. And it would erode India's perception of the credibility and capability of U.S. power and America's reliability as a strategic partner.

The bottom line here is clear: India and the United States have a shared interest in working together to end the scourge of extremism and terrorism that threatens stability, freedom, and prosperity across South Asia and beyond. The President's current plan to