those men were alive, they were valuable. Their captors used starvation, disease, isolation, physical, and mental torture to push these men to confess to war crimes, to bombing hospitals and schools with napalm. They were beaten every single day they were held in captivity.

The Viet Cong saw a fighter in SAM JOHNSON. They saw a man who might start a riot, a rebellion. They called him a ''diehard,'' and so—with 10 other men—they moved him from the Hanoi Hilton to a place they called Alcatraz, hell within hell.

SAM was alone for over 2 years. He stayed in a windowless concrete room, 9 feet wide, 4 feet, 9 by 4 feet. Every summer, it got up to 110 degrees Fahrenheit in his cell.

His legs were shackled with irons—both legs—every minute he was in his cell. Ten other men went with him: Jeremiah Denton, Jim Stockdale, Bob Shumaker, Ronald Storz, Harry Jenkins, Howard Rutledge, Nels Tanner, Jim Mulligan, George McKnight, and George Coker.

□ 1745

Ten came home. Ronald Storz died in Alcatraz in captivity. SAM and his 10 brothers all learned to lean on each other to survive. In Alcatraz, one day SAM was put in a cell and beaten and beaten and beaten to make him write a document and sign his confession of committing a war crime.

Jeremiah Denton heard the clamor when SAM was thrown back into his cell hours after he was taken off from his cell with the Viet Cong. Admiral Denton said: SAM, SAM, it is okay, buddy. There was silence for a couple moments, and then SAM said: I made them write it, but I had to sign it. Admiral Denton said: It is okay, SAM. You are, okay. Hang on. You did a good job.

Because of what SAM and others went through, every naval aviator, marine aviator, Air Force pilot, Army pilot, Navy SEAL, Marine Force Recon, Army Green Berets attend what is known as SERE school—S-E-R-E, survive, evade, resist, escape—POW school.

I went to SERE for 1 week in the fall of 1991. I was fed little amounts of food. No sleep. The last 2 days were in the POW camp in a small concrete room like SAM, alone, stuffed into a small box in the dark, loud music and a waterboard. That training gave me a taste of torture—my strengths and weaknesses. SAM never had that training. He learned it with his blood and broken bones.

I want to close by using the tap code, the way SAM and his fellow prisoners used to communicate without talking. It is a 5 by 5 matrix, 25 letters. It omits the K.

(Tapping on podium.)

In the Hanoi Hilton and Alcatraz, that says: I salute you. SAM, if I was there that day, 42 years ago when you came home, I would say: SAM, I salute you.

God bless them all.

I yield back the balance of my time.

HONORING THE 42ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE RELEASE OF AMERICAN POWS FROM VIETNAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Texas for his remarks talking about SAM JOHNSON, one of the great American heroes that we have the honor here of serving with. That tap code that you just heard was really the lifeline, the lifeline for so many of the almost 600 POWs, the vast majority in the Hoa Lo Prison. So while you heard those taps, those taps were actually the communication system that allowed those POWs to have some sort of contact with another human, and, I would argue, probably saved many lives.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield to my good friend from Kentucky.

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD), my friend, for his leadership on this issue and for leading this special hour. I also want to thank my friend from Texas for honoring our colleague SAM JOHNSON, a true American hero who, through his service and sacrifice, his time in the Hanoi Hilton, his time as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, really showcased what it means to be a great patriot and an American hero willing to sacrifice for his fellow countrymen and for the freedom that we all enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of central and eastern Kentucky, I, too, rise today to recognize the 42nd anniversary of the release of American prisoners of war from Vietnam. I would like to honor the brave men and women who courageously wore our Nation's cloth and made great sacrifices in the name of freedom.

As I walk into my congressional office, I am reminded every day of all the American servicemembers that never returned home from past wars by the POW flag that I proudly display outside of my office.

Since the beginning of the Revolutionary War, Kentuckians have continued to answer our Nation's call to service. In fact, over 125,000 Kentuckians courageously and unselfishly served during the Vietnam era, and the people of Kentucky honor those who fought and died in Vietnam by commissioning the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which overlooks Kentucky's beautiful State capitol building in Frankfort. I would also like to recognize the organizations that keep the memories of those who have sacrificed much for our country alive, organizations such as Task Force Omega of Kentucky, Rolling Thunder, and the Kentucky Patriot Guard, who constantly remind us to never forget the servicemembers who have perished and have not yet returned home from Vietnam and other wars fought on foreign soil.

While being held captive, American POWs found strength in each other, and as Congressman DOLD and Congressman OLSON pointed out, those taps were the way that those men in that prison kept each other's spirits alive. Through their struggle, they found resilience; through their faith, they found comfort; and through their patriotism, they found hope. We are so grateful to have these servicemembers home. As we know all too well from recent events in the Middle East, not all prisoners of war make it back to their family members alive, but we owe all of them a debt of gratitude.

Unlike the veterans of World War II, Iraq, the Persian Gulf war or Afghanistan, those who served in Vietnam had a very different and unfortunate experience, many of them, when they returned home. Some were advised to change into civilian clothes and avoid contact with protestors, and it really hurt. They didn't deserve it. They deserve better. So for all of those veterans of the Vietnam war, including those who were POWs, we welcome them home because they deserve our respect, and they deserve to be welcomed home to a grateful nation.

American servicemembers found hope in the fact that a grateful nation would not leave them behind and would do everything possible to bring them home. We, as Americans, still stand behind that promise today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois for the opportunity to honor the 42nd anniversary of the release of American POWs from Vietnam.

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kentucky for coming and joining us in honoring these really incredible servicemen, each with an incredible story, and really as we talk about it, actually, Mr. Speaker, I came to the floor yesterday. Yesterday I came to this very spot to talk about my uncle. My uncle is one of the Alcatraz 11, lives not far from the Capitol here in Washington. He was flying off the USS *Coral Sea* in an F–8 Crusader and was shot down on a low-level mission, flying about a thousand feet above the ground.

Now, for those, Mr. Speaker, that don't know what an F–8 Crusader is, it is a jet that can fly at Mach 1.72, nearly twice the speed of sound. When it filled up with smoke after he was hit, he had very little time to eject. He ejected. His parachute opened about 35 feet above the ground, and he broke his back on impact.

Now, this is an incredible story. Yesterday marked the 50th anniversary of being shot down. That was one of the darkest days, I would argue, certainly in our family; but for American servicemen, and certainly aviators, that is certainly a very dark day.

Today, February 12, marks a very different day, a day for us to rejoice because it was the day that marks Operation Homecoming, the day that over 600 American POWs would eventually be released, and February 12 was the day that those first POWs would be released from the Hoa Lo Prison.

The Hoa Lo Prison, Mr. Speaker, was a prison that was built by the French, and unspeakable things happened at this prison. What is incredible to me is not the darkness of what happened at the Hoa Lo Prison, a prison that we know today as the Hanoi Hilton. What is remarkable to me is the fact that these servicemen relied upon faith and honor to get them through, and largely each other.

So I just want those that may be tuning in to put themselves in the place of an American aviator, jumping on board a jet. Put yourself, perhaps, in the cockpit of that F–8 Crusader.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not revealing any news when we talk about American servicemen and -women being a little bit cocky if they are out there flying. I think some might think they are invincible. Well, the world changed certainly for my uncle and for many on the day of their captivity. They no longer had their aircraft. They no longer had their sidearm. They no longer had their uniform. All was stripped from them. They were issued, in essence, a pair of pajamas and a pair of sandals.

Little did my uncle or SAM JOHNSON or Nels Tanner or Jim Stockdale or Jeremiah Denton or JOHN MCCAIN or many of the other POWs realize how long this conflict would continue. What they did know was that each and every one of them, as an American fighting man, was going to return home with honor.

Many of you may know, Mr. Speaker, the story of JOHN MCCAIN. His father was very high up in the United States Navy. The Vietnamese knew that they had a prize when they had JOHN MCCAIN, and he was offered early release. They were going to give him a free pass home and comfort to be back here in the United States. The devastation that would have done to the POWs, the morale would have been devastating, and so he turned them down. The Vietnamese said it was going to be very bad for you now, Mr. MCCAIN, and indeed it was. He, as well as the other Americans in captivity, would endure years of torture.

□ 1800

The big four, Mr. Speaker, was name, rank, serial number, and date of birth. And these men would be tortured for additional information. Every person—at least everyone that I know—has their breaking point, and certainly American POWs are no different.

They set up a system. They set up, in essence, a military operation, following rank. Jim Stockdale was the highest-ranking officer and, therefore, sent word out that if they were broken, to be able to stiffen their back up and give no additional information next time.

That tap code system that you heard the gentleman from Texas talk about, the 5 by 5 matrix, A–B–C–D–E–F–G–H–I–J—they eliminated the K because they needed to have a 5 by 5 matrix. Rows and columns—first the row, then the column. So B is first row, second column. And really, the way they did it is, ''shave and a haircut, two bits'' is how you started this conversation. So most Americans know that if you give the rap, they are going to respond with two taps. And that is when you knew there was an American on the other side of the wall. If they got any sort of a different response, they knew that it was most likely not an American and, therefore, they were going to stop their communication.

What was going on through those walls was literally like hundreds of woodpeckers going nonstop, day in and day out, letting people know that it was okay, that they had them. They knew when someone was coming. They could hear the keys rattling and they knew that their comrade was going to be taken out and tortured and beaten. So when they got back to their cell, that tap code would go, letting them know that there was somebody there for them. Incredible.

Now out of the hundreds of POWs that went to North Vietnam and were captured, there was a crew of the 11 greatest threats to camp security, according to the North Vietnamese. They became known as the Alcatraz 11. My uncle, Bob Shumaker, was one of the Alcatraz 11, along with Admiral Stockdale, who was shot down in 1965. He was the senior U.S. officer present during the camps. And he was considered to be a big troublemaker, no question.

Also, George Coker, who was shot down in 1966. Jeremiah Denton, a United States Senator from the great State of Alabama, was shot down in 1965. Harry Jenkins was shot down also in '65. SAM JOHNSON, whom we talked about, whom we have the honor of serving with here in the United States Congress, was shot down in 1966 on his 25th combat mission. George McKnight was shot down in 1965. James Mulligan was shot down in 1966. Howard Rutledge was shot down in 1965. Ron Storz of the Alcatraz 11 was the only one who did not make it home alive.

Nels Tanner has a unique story. He was the last of the Alcatraz 11. Nels Tanner got his ticket to Alcatraz by making the Vietnamese look bad. When he was being tortured and they were trying to get information about who was his commanding officer, Nels Tanner told them it was ''Ben Casey'' and ''Clark Kent.'' Well, here in America, everybody knows Ben Casey and Clark Kent are not real figures. And when word got back to the Vietnamese that they had been made a joke of, he got his ticket to Alcatraz.

Mr. Speaker, I want people to understand Alcatraz for a minute. The reason why these 11 men went to Alcatraz is because they were the thorn in the side of the North Vietnamese. They were the ones that resisted the hardest. They were the ones that caused the problems.

The American fighting men in the Hoa Lo Prison, the Hanoi Hilton, they also caused problems, but these 11 were singled out. And they went into a cell that was—at most generous—about 4 feet by 9. Just imagine that, 4 feet by 9. It is about yea big, at 9 feet in front of you. The Alcatraz 11 spent, on average, about 2½ years in this prison camp. They were able to get out of their cell for 15 minutes a day to be able to go empty their sanitation bucket. They ate in their cell. And they had a tremendous amount of time.

What can you do? The most important muscle that they exercised was their brain, which is why the tap code was so important. But they used other methods. They could cough. They could sneeze. They could try to do different things along those lines. They waved their hands in front of the door so that shadows would be indicative of those letters and they were able to communicate.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say, my uncle built his home in Fairfax Station, Virginia, in his mind long before any brick was laid. Brick by brick, he knew exactly how many bricks it would take. He knew exactly how many feet of pipe it would take. He knew exactly how much lumber. These were the exercises. He built it, tour it down. He built it and tour it down. These were the exercises that these men would go through.

At Alcatraz, SAM JOHNSON learned French through the walls. A product of Texas public schools, he might not have had the opportunity to learn a foreign language. So he used that opportunity in Alcatraz to learn French from Bob Shumaker. It is not the most ideal way to learn French, but the one thing they did have was time.

The Vietnamese tried to strip everything from these men, but there is one thing that they couldn't strip. They couldn't strip their faith. They couldn't strip their honor. And each was determined that they would return to the United States with honor. That, I think, is just remarkable.

One of the things, as we think about February 12, 1973, we cannot miss what was happening back here at home. Their spouses played a vital role and an active role not only with the government but also in the Paris Peace Accords, advocating for the release of the American POWs.

Mr. Speaker, Vietnam was not a popular war, a war that went into living rooms. But the one thing that the American public was able to unite and rally around was our American POWs. Bracelets were worn identifying American POWs and the day that they were shot down.

I have a bracelet, Mr. Speaker, in my office. It is sitting next to two pictures—one of the day Bob Shumaker

was shot down, February 11, 1965, and the other is this picture right here. This is the first time that he had an opportunity to see his wife and his son Grant, who was about 8 years and 3 months at the time, I think. When he had been shot down, his son Grant was only about 3 months old. This is the picture of them being reunited.

I know it is not the best picture for people to be able to view. But in 1973, the styles were a little bit different. So after the release, Bob Shumaker called his wife, Lorraine, and wanted to make sure that she dressed in the fashion of 1965. You can't see the go-go boots, but you can see the miniskirt. And that was how he had remembered her, and that is how he wanted to see her when he got off that plane.

Mr. Speaker, 8 years and a day for Bob Shumaker; 7 years plus for SAM JOHNSON; 5½ years for JOHN MCCAIN. Incredible stories. Torture.

I can tell you that some of America's finest servicemen tried to take their own lives because they thought they let their country down when they gave information to the Vietnamese. But they were pulled up by their comrades, by the men who were next to them in these cells.

There are a couple of others whom I think are particularly interesting, Mr. Speaker.

Everett Alvarez actually was the first American POW. He was a U.S. Navy commander and was held in captivity for 8½ years.

Douglas Hegdahl was really a unique case. Most of the POWs were aviators, whether they were flying for the United States Air Force or the United States Navy. Doug Hegdahl was a guy who was in the Navy but happened to be on a ship. He came up and happened to be standing on the deck. The ship zigged when he thought it would zag, and over the side he went. When he was picked up by the Vietnamese in civilian clothes, they thought he was a member of the Central Intelligence Agency. They put him in the Hoa Lo Prison, and he started to just get along.

One of the things with that tap code that they tried to do each and every day was they would communicate who was newly in the prison. And when you think about trying to memorize the names of all the POWs—because if, for some reason, somebody were to be released or to escape, they wanted to make sure that the United States had the opportunity to know exactly who was in captivity. It was absolutely critical for them, critical for their families to be able to know that they were still alive.

Well, there were a couple of folks, Mr. Speaker, who were released early. I would say that was not necessarily the tack that many of the other POWs would have taken. Doug Hegdahl did not want to be released but was ordered to go because he had a photographic memory and knew every single POW, knew their hometown, their phone number. When he got back to the United States, he took his time to go to all of these places to visit the families of the POWs, to let them know that their son, that their husband, that their brother was still alive. He had memorized their addresses and phone numbers. He is really a remarkable man.

Bud Day, Mr. Speaker, another pilot that was shot down, sustained significant injuries while flying his F–100F. JOHN MCCAIN credits him for really saving his life. While in captivity, he was in really tough shape. Bud Day was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, as was Jim Stockdale.

Each and every one of these men—certainly the Alcatraz 11—were highly decorated for their efforts. But I think the thing that was most important to them was being able to return home with honor.

We look at today, Mr. Speaker—February 12, 2015—as a celebration honoring the legacy that these American fighting men have given us all, an incredible faith and a dedication to make sure that each and every one of them was going to return with honor.

There was a ceremony that happened on February 12 as they were discharged and marched out of the Hoa Lo Prison. They were determined to march in rank, as an American fighting force, and then were discharged one by one. The first one shot down would be the first one released. So that was Everett Alvarez. The second one was Bob Shumaker.

They didn't believe that this day had finally come. They saw that C–141 come into Hanoi and really didn't start the real celebration until the 141 had lifted off of that tarmac and the first group of American POWs were on their way home.

Mr. Speaker, I am in awe every time I read stories of these men who did incredible things to endure and to overcome. It is an honor to be able to serve with one in this body, but it is also an honor to be able to stand here today on the day of Operation Homecoming and its 42nd anniversary and to say that America will never forget, America will always remember, that we stood by you then, and we look to stand by all of our men and women in uniform.

□ 1815

We are in the midst of a conflict right now in the midst of a war on terror. We must make sure that we give our men and women that we have asked to go out and defend us the tools necessary to protect our country and to do the job that we have asked them to do. I hope, Madam Speaker, that no one has to endure what these men endured in Hanoi.

I want to thank my colleagues who join me here today, but I also wanted to take this opportunity for those that may be tuning in to let the POWs from the Vietnam conflict know how much they mean not only to me, but to our country. We thank you, and we love you.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

HONORING THE NAACP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MIMI WALTERS of California). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) for 30 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman for the recitation. It was very touching, very moving, and I just want to commend him for keeping the memory alive. Thank you so much.

Madam Speaker, I am honored tonight to thank the leadership and to thank the Members of Congress who have been supportive of this resolution that we bring to the floor for a discussion. This is a resolution that honors the NAACP.

This resolution is not new to the Congress of the United States of America because, in 2006, it actually passed the House of Representatives by a voice vote and then, in 2007, it passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 410–0; in 2008, 403–0; 2009, 424–0; and 2010, 421–0.

I thank the leadership and the Members of this body for the support it has shown to the NAACP with the passage of this resolution through the years.

I am honored to be a member of the NAACP. I take great pride in my membership. I have a life membership in the NAACP. I have been fortunate enough to serve on the board of the Houston branch of the NAACP. I served for nearly a decade as president of the Houston branch of the NAACP, and I have been the beneficiary of the NAACP's works. The NAACP has made America the beautiful a more beautiful America.

Tonight, Madam Speaker, I would like to continue this discussion of the NAACP. I would like to say just a few words first about the founding of the NAACP. It was founded on this day 106 years ago—106 years ago—when approximately 60 people answered what was called the call.

It was a clarion call for persons to come together to talk about and discuss a means by which lynching could be dealt with. Of the 60 people, about seven were African Americans. The NAACP is not now and never has been an organization that has been supported by only African Americans or what some might call a Black organization. It has always been an integrated organization.

After having been founded in 1909, February 12, 106 years ago, the NAACP did embark upon a campaign to end lynching in the United States of America, a sad chapter in our history, but one that we must never forget because we never want to see these things happen again.

As things are doing well now in this area of lynching—we don't have lynchings in the United States of