

General Dempsey and our military leaders have declared time and time again that sequestration reduces our Armed Forces' readiness and their capabilities, and it unnecessarily puts our men and women in uniform at increased risk.

Here, we expect our servicemen and -women to protect our Nation; however, the imposed budget cuts due to sequestration inhibit their readiness and threaten our national security. It is our duty to ensure our Nation is protected and, in doing so, maintain the operational readiness of our military.

I pledge to work to preserve and strengthen our Nation's Armed Forces and follow in the footsteps of Representative John McHugh by advocating for our troops and veterans stationed in the 21st Congressional District of New York and in our surrounding communities.

Two weeks ago, I had the honor to attend a small congressional delegation visit to Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan. On this trip, I was privileged to meet with soldiers who are based out of Fort Drum, as well as many others who have trained there.

What an opportunity it was to visit with the troops from the Resolute Support headquarters forces, USFOR-A soldiers, and counterterrorism operations forces. I thanked them for their service and discussed ways we can protect and strengthen Fort Drum for our district.

This trip was truly essential in order for me to gain a personal perspective of the circumstances under which so many of our brave soldiers from Fort Drum have served abroad.

Additionally, I was able to meet with many important foreign dignitaries, including King Abdullah of Jordan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, and Iraqi President Fuad Masum, to discuss issues of concern to the region. These nations and their leaders play a key role in the effort among Arab nations to combat ISIS and other terrorist organizations.

The discussions and meetings with these dignitaries were informative and useful. I believe that continued open dialogue and conversation with these leaders will be incredibly beneficial to maintain and establish our Nation's perspective on defense policy.

This trip gave me a chance to hear from our servicemen and -women on the ground and other national leaders about real solutions related to stabilizing the region, continued threats to our own national security, the readiness of our Armed Forces, and the tools they need to keep our country safe.

Serving the Fort Drum community in Congress and as a member of the House Armed Services Committee is an incredible honor. I am beyond thankful to our men and women in uniform and grateful to their families for their service to our community.

Thank you to you and your loved ones for keeping our Nation safe.

CELEBRATING THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF MRS. ALLIEFAIR ROGERS

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

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the milestone in the life of Mrs. Alliefair Rogers who, this week, is celebrating her 100th birthday. Mrs. Rogers is also, incidentally, a second-generation centurion, as her mother, Ida Jane, also lived to the age of 103.

Throughout her life in the past century, Mrs. Rogers has witnessed some of the most significant moments that have shaped our Nation. Born during the onset of World War I, Mrs. Rogers was only 2 years old when America entered the Great War, sending our doughboys across the Atlantic.

By the time she was 5 years old, the first radio stations were going on the air in America, prohibition was enacted, and women for the first time had the right to vote. By her 12th birthday, Charles Lindbergh had flown across the Atlantic Ocean, and the first motion picture with sound was played in theaters. At the age of 14, she witnessed the beginning of the Great Depression.

Just months before turning 25, Mrs. Rogers learned of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and, over the next 5 years, said goodbye to family members and friends as they left Walhalla, South Carolina, to fight against the Axis Powers.

Before her 31st birthday, she had witnessed the D-day invasion, the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of Iwo Jima, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the surrender of both Germany and Japan. By the age of 33, she witnessed the rebirth of Israel as a nation; and, at 40, America sent troops overseas to fight in Korea.

By her 50th birthday, she had lived through the building of the Berlin Wall, America's first satellite in space, the deployment of forces to Vietnam, the Cuban missile crisis, and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

By 60 years old, Mrs. Rogers witnessed the end of the Vietnam war, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the first human to step foot on the moon.

Within her next 15 years, by the age of 75, Mrs. Rogers experienced the first resignation of a United States President, the invention of the personal computer, the first woman Supreme Court Justice, the end of the cold war, and the beginning of the space shuttle program.

In her lifetime, Mrs. Rogers has witnessed the administration of 17 United States Presidents and a significant portion of this Nation's history.

Today, I join with the many friends and family who are celebrating the virtuous and faith-led life of my aunt Mrs. Alliefair Rogers and wish her a very happy 100th birthday.

ONGOING IRAN NUCLEAR TALKS

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

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my serious concerns about the ongoing Iran nuclear talks. Iran is no friend to the United States or our allies. Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism in the world.

Iran has continued to develop intercontinental ballistic missile technology. The only legitimate purpose of such technology is to deliver a nuclear payload.

Don't just take my word for it. Lieutenant General Vincent Stewart, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, recently wrote in his statement for the record to the House Armed Services Committee:

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to threaten U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East. Iran's actions and policies are designed to further its goal of becoming the dominant regional power, as well as to enhance its strategic depth. Tehran views the United States as its most capable adversary and has fashioned its military strategy and doctrine accordingly.

In terms of nuclear capabilities, General Stewart goes on to say:

We continue to assess that Iran's goal is to develop capabilities that would allow it to build missile-deliverable nuclear weapons, should a decision be made to do so. The regime faces no insurmountable technical barriers to producing a nuclear weapon, making Iran's political will the central issue.

One Arab official recently told *The Wall Street Journal*: "We prefer a collapse of the diplomatic process to a bad deal."

Since they started in 2009, the negotiations with Iran have been marked by missed deadline after missed deadline. It seems like each time details of the deal are leaked to the press, the United States is giving up more, whether it is the number of centrifuges or the length of the deal.

□ 1215

Just last week, Secretary of State John Kerry came before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and pleaded for more time and understanding as the State Department continues to hold talks about Iran's nuclear program. He asked it to sit silently while the details are negotiated in secret. He urged us to just trust him and his team.

Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly hard to trust an administration that continually fails at these kinds of negotiations. Look at the Bergdahl deal when he gave away five high-level al Qaeda officials. Look at the recent talks with Cuba in which the United States received very little while we released Cuban spies and pledged open trade relations. And we can't forget about President Obama telling Russian President Dmitry Medvedev that he will have "more flexibility" to deal with nuclear issues after the 2012 Presidential elections—flexibility to deal with Vladimir Putin. Far too often they give away the bank, and we get very little in return.

Tomorrow, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will come to this Chamber to share his perspective on the threats posed by a nuclear Iran. Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have complained that the speech is somehow out of line or for political purposes only. They have pledged to boycott the event, and the Vice President has refused to attend.

Mr. Speaker, I remain greatly disturbed by the way the Obama administration has treated Israel, our greatest and most important ally in the Middle East. I suspect the real reason the Obama administration is so opposed to Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech is because they are afraid of what he is going to say. They know he will speak the truth and that his statements will stand in direct contrast to what is being said by Secretary of State Kerry. Prime Minister Netanyahu won't hide the real issues. These nuclear talks threaten not only Israel, but also the Middle East and the entire world.

Last summer, I traveled to the Middle East with the Armed Services Committee. During that trip, we met with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and he really impressed me. He has a clear vision and message about his country's defensive needs, and he is very determined to meet those needs.

Mr. Speaker, Israel is our strongest and most consistent ally in the Middle East. We should listen to what they have to say.

THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

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

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, today is March 2, 2015. March 2, 1836, marked the beginning of what would become the Republic of Texas. Today on that day, 59 men signed the Declaration of Independence from Mexico and created the Republic of Texas. The events of January through April of 1836 are relatively significant, and I will walk through some of this history.

I stand here today to honor the incredible events of those days and the 179 years of Texas experience that I am proud to be a part of. It is a great honor to be able to have been born in Texas and to claim a part of that incredible legacy.

One of the signature events of the Texas revolution with Mexico, of course, was the battle of the Alamo, which began on February 23, 1836, where Colonel William Barret Travis began to gather men at the Alamo.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a transcription of his letter written to the people of Texas and all Americans on February 24.

TO THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS & ALL AMERICANS IN THE WORLD: Fellow citizens & compatriots—I am besieged, by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna—I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded a surrender

at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch—The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily & will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country—Victory or Death.

WILLIAM BARRET TRAVIS,
Lt. Col. comdt.

P.S. The Lord is on our side—When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn—We have since found in deserted houses 80 or 90 bushels & got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves.

Travis.

Mr. CONAWAY. Travis and his other fellows stood watch at the Alamo from February 23 until March 6. As they were fighting and looking at their ultimate death, the Declaration of Independence was signed on March 2. Four days later, Santa Anna, with the Mexican Army, overran the Alamo and killed every single one of the defenders there.

There are other events, such as the massacre at Goliad in which Santa Anna ordered the murder and execution of 400-plus Texans who had been a part of that fight. It was cold-blooded, it was ruthless, and it was unnecessary, but Santa Anna chose to take those steps specifically on his order on more than one occasion. And then, culminating on the 21st of April, the Battle of San Jacinto took place, in which Santa Anna and his entire army were surrounded by Texans in a decisive victory in which very few Texans lost their lives. Santa Anna was defeated, and the Texas experience—our independence—was secured with that battle.

Mr. Speaker, I honor today the men and women who stood that ground, that hallowed ground, at the Alamo, at Goliad, San Jacinto, and other battles across Texas. They were stouthearted; they were resolute; they were self-sufficient; they were independent; they loved freedom; they loved independence; and as a result of that, they created Texas, an experience that has now gone on for some 179 years. There were almost 9 of these years in which Texas was the Republic of Texas, becoming a part of the United States in 1846 under that proud Lone Star Flag that we still fly today.

My purpose here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is to call attention to the Declaration of Independence, and, more importantly, call attention to the faith that the men and women had in freedom and liberty and were willing to put their lives on the line. Many of those lives were lost in the fight for freedom and to create Texas. I am proud to call myself a Texan.

I ask God to continue to bless Texas, and I ask God to continue to bless the United States of America.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LOUDERMILK) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Dear Lord, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

At the beginning of a new workweek, we use this moment to be reminded of Your presence, and to tap the resources needed by the Members of this people's House to do their work as well as it can be done.

May they be led by Your spirit in the decisions they make. May they possess Your power as they steady themselves amid the pressures of persistent problems.

May their faith in You deliver them from tensions that tear the House apart, and from worries that might wear them out.

All this day, and through the week, may they do their best to find solutions to pressing issues facing our Nation. Please hasten the day when justice and love shall dwell in the hearts of all peoples, and rule the affairs of the nations of Earth.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KILDEE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE CASS BALLENGER

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)