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## House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. FOXX).

### DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,  
March 24, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable VIRGINIA FOXX to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 1 minute a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1000

### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana) at 10 a.m.

### MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, 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, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

### AFGHANISTAN: THE GRAVEYARD OF EMPIRES

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, last week in the House Armed Services Committee, we had a hearing on the budget for fiscal year 2016. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, both testified before the committee, and I have great respect for both of them. I asked them if, after a decade in Afghanistan, keeping troops in Afghanistan for 9 more years would even make a difference.

Last year in his Politico article, "Down the Opium Rathole," Roger Simon argues, "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 this rathole.' . . . Unfortunately, the U.S. Government does not think this way. Even though our combat troops are leaving Afghanistan, our money will continue to flow there, billion after billion."

Mr. Speaker, I submit this Politico article for the RECORD.

[From Politico, Oct. 29, 2014]

#### DOWN THE OPIUM RATHOLE

(By Roger Simon)

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 this rathole."

Unfortunately, the U.S. government does not think this way.

The U.S. government wakes up every morning and says: "The rathole is looking a little empty today. Let's pound a few more billion dollars down there."

And when that rathole is Afghanistan, the billions are essentially without end.

Even though our combat troops are leaving Afghanistan, our money will continue to flow there, billion after billion.

The National Priorities Project says "\$753.3 billion has been allocated for the war in Afghanistan since 2001, including \$89.1 billion in fiscal year 2014."

President Obama hopes to reduce U.S. forces in Afghanistan to just 9,800 troops next year. But the money spigot will not be turned off.

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. In Asia, only Bangladesh is poorer. According to the World Food Programme, half the population lives below the poverty line; Afghanistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world; and more than half the children under 5 years old are chronically malnourished.

Yet at one thing Afghanistan succeeds superbly: Afghanistan illegally produces and exports opium, morphine and heroin in such quantities that, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan is "practically the exclusive supplier of the world's deadliest drug [93% of the global opiates market]. Leaving aside 19th-century China, that had a population at that time 15 times larger than today's Afghanistan, no other country in the world has ever produced narcotics on such a deadly scale."

The United States has spent billions trying to stop this trade, but it has failed utterly. In fact, under U.S. occupation, drug production has increased.

Opiates come from opium poppies, which are planted in profusion in Afghanistan. More than eight years ago, we decided to spray the poppy fields with herbicides, but this was unpopular with the Afghan government, which didn't want its illegal drug profits to stop. And even some counterinsurgency experts feared that killing the opium poppies would drive angry poppy farmers into the arms of the Taliban.

Lots of people get confused between counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, by the way. A military expert once explained it to me this way:

Counterinsurgency is when you try to win the hearts and minds of the people.

Counterterrorism is when you kill the people and then try to win their hearts and minds.

The United States has tried both policies in Afghanistan for years.

□ 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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And while the Taliban has become adept at fighting counterterrorism, the Afghan government has become adept at exploiting counterinsurgency.

Take narcotics. How does a country that has few and terrible roads, like Afghanistan, get 93 percent of the world's opiates out of its country?

One way is by air. And in January 2013, the U.S. government said it would no longer grant contracts to a private Afghanistan airline because the U.S. military's anti-corruption unit said the airline "was involved in bulk opium smuggling."

But the Afghan government howled, and the U.S. lifted its ban.

There are other examples, but only one conclusion. As Michael Lumpkin, assistant secretary of defense for special operations/low-intensity conflict, said in a letter on Oct. 7: "In our opinion, the failure to reduce poppy cultivation and increase eradication is due to the lack of Afghan government support for the effort."

But over 12 years, the U.S. government pounded \$7.6 billion down the drug eradication rathole in Afghanistan.

In a report last week, John Sopko, the U.S. special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, said: "By every conceivable metric, we've failed. Production and cultivation are up, interdiction and eradication are down, financial support to the insurgency is up, and addiction and abuse are at unprecedented levels in Afghanistan."

To our government, the solution was clear: Pound more money down the rathole.

As The Washington Post recently reported: "The State Department requested \$137.5 million in funding for counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan for fiscal year 2014, a \$31 million increase over fiscal year 2012."

Further, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently wrote a report saying we should give Afghanistan "between \$5 billion and \$8 billion annually for at least a decade" even though most U.S. troops will (supposedly) be long gone by then.

So we have spent \$7.6 billion on a drug eradication program that increased drug production. And now we are planning to pour \$50 billion to \$80 billion into that same country over the next 10 years.

And you know what worries me? Pretty soon we are going to be talking about real money.

Mr. JONES. In recent days, the waste of billions of dollars in Afghanistan has been dominating the headlines:

March 20 of this year, "Afghanistan Can't Manage Billions in Aid, U.S. Inspector Finds"; March 14, 2015, "C.I.A. Cash Ended Up in Coffers of Al Qaeda"; May 4, 2013, "Karzai Says He Was Assured C.I.A. Would Continue Delivering Bags of Cash."

Mr. Speaker, the squandering of billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars by the Afghan Government is one small aspect of the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan.

The House is looking to vote on the budget produced by the Republican majority this week which continues billions of dollars the military deserves, but the billions of dollars going to Afghanistan are a waste. The Republican budget also provides billions of dollars for emergency war funding to get around sequestration. Why do we have sequestration in the first place? Because Congress has not passed an honest budget in years.

A couple of weeks ago, the House Armed Services Committee had a hear-

ing on U.S. policy in Afghanistan, where I asked General John Campbell, U.S. Army, commander of the International Security Assistance Force and United States Forces in Afghanistan, if he will ever have a successor who will be honest with Congress and the American people about the fact that we have done as much as we can do in Afghanistan. He did not give me a direct answer, but his response was this: "For very little continued investment, we can make this a shining light of central Asia."

Mr. Speaker, if I had had more time, I would have asked General Campbell what his definition of "very little continued investment" is when we have already spent billions and billions of dollars and spilled blood in Afghanistan.

There are bridges, roads, educational needs, and veterans benefits to provide here in the United States. Let's focus on their needs rather than on chasing something that will never happen. History has proven Afghanistan will never change. It is a graveyard of empires.

Mr. Speaker, without a debate in Congress, President Obama signed a Bilateral Security Agreement with Afghanistan to keep our United States troops there for 9 more years. Let's cut the 9 years to 3 or 4 years and bring our troops home.

Finally, with an ever-climbing \$18 trillion debt, the American people are frustrated. Congress needs to impose spending controls to save taxpayer money.

Mr. Speaker, may God continue to bless our men and women in uniform, and may God continue to bless America.

#### THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the latest chapter in the drama of Republican control of Congress. This is their first opportunity with complete control of both Chambers to bring into focus what they would do governing, and the results aren't pretty.

We are discussing this week a budget that has been labeled by press accounts that actually give them the benefit of the doubt as being phony or a disaster. It has been condemned by many conservative commentators as a sham.

The purported \$5.5 trillion in budget savings over the next 10 years provides no good explanation about how it can actually be achieved. There is a trillion dollars in unspecified reductions "other mandatory programs." They would abolish the Affordable Care Act, but somehow keep all of the revenues that finance it.

There are a few areas of clarity which are hardly comforting. The ratcheting down support for our low-income college students through Pell grants is hardly a step forward and will

be widely condemned the more clearly people understand it.

We are back to the Medicare voucher, which may have a different name but is still toxic. A measure of their understanding of its unpopularity is their refusal to put it into effect for seniors now. Instead they would have people approaching retirement age in their mid-fifties who will be able to enjoy the benefits and uncertainty of a vouchered Medicare program.

It is silent on the transportation crisis that is already upon us. The latest transportation extension expires May 31. Resources are not going to be available to get us through this fiscal year, let alone the next fiscal year that they would budget for. And if the budget that they have foreseen would somehow be enacted as written, the next fiscal year would see massive cuts for every single State across the country for transportation.

It continues to chip away at the ability of the Federal Government to hire and maintain the skilled workforce Americans depend upon. One of the most bizarre examples is their continued attack on the ability of the IRS, the Internal Revenue Service, to perform the functions necessary to finance our government.

What business cripples its accounts receivable department? And the proof of this approach is available to any American who tries to call the IRS to get information. It is almost impossible to get through now, let alone with the budget cuts that are anticipated. You can ask any CPA in your district about the devastating effects of crippling the IRS on not just the average citizen, but even on people who can hire the best legal and accounting services available.

While the IRS may be an attractive target for their assault on government, the attack is not limited to the Internal Revenue or the EPA. This budget will have crippling effects on the American way of life all across the country. This budgetary approach that is already baked in produces fewer people to be able to deal with the services for the exploding number of retired people seeking help from the Social Security Administration. It shortchanges the maintenance of our national parks. It underfunds medical research that can make a huge difference for American families.

Mr. Speaker, there are things that could be done. I introduced legislation this week, the REIN-IN Act, which would cut \$100 billion of unnecessary spending on nuclear weapons over the next 10 years. These savings could be used to shore up the Department of Defense without resorting to the budget gimmicks that they are using.

That is the bitter reality of their budget approach. It is not their theatrics or the creative terminology. Republicans are avoiding the hard questions and reasonable solutions. It is simply an assault on providing Americans with the services they want, need,