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The reason for the strategy is pretty clear. That kind of strategy would ensure that our ally Israel would have to fight block by block by block to get captives back. The one that I was in with Mr. ENGEL was not far from where it came up close to a nursery school.

This is the reality of the type of regime we are dealing with. It is not just transferring the money. It is also transferring the new rockets and the new missiles to Hamas.

Why were they doing that? Because they said the inventory is low because of the rockets fired off—this is the reality of the types of intentions that this regime has. Many times, they telegraph those intentions. When they are yelling, “Death to the Great Satan, death to the little Satan,” it is not as though they are not telling us the Ayatollah’s intent. He is, after all, the Supreme Leader here.

Iran’s support of terrorism and destabilization in the region will be far more intense, frankly, if it possesses a nuclear weapon or, indeed, if it had undetectable nuclear breakout capability.

The stakes could not be higher. That is why we need a good agreement, and I hope that all the Members support this legislation. It may not be a perfect bill, but it is a good bill. It is an important and responsible response to an administration that otherwise would shut out Congress.

I am sorry it took the White House so long to embrace it. Weeks ago, the White House was issuing veto threats and pushing back hard. Were it to pass, it would be the end of diplomacy as we know it, they said at the time. Now, they are on board, and it is good that they are on board.

With this legislation in place—and this is the great upside—Congress will be in a much better position to judge any final agreement that the President strikes with Iran, and I believe that our diplomacy will have a better shot because of it.

Instead of Iranian negotiators knowing that they can wear down the administration, this now injects Congress as an important backstop. It gives us leverage to address these issues like what we discussed today, to address the issue of: Will our inspectors, the international inspectors, have the right to go on military bases?

Let me tell you, I was part of the 1994 framework agreement, and the consequences of not getting the ability of weapons inspectors, international inspectors, to go on to military bases, not having that right to go anywhere, anytime, had profound consequences. It is why we are dealing with North Korea having the weapon today that they possess.

We should not repeat that error. U.S. diplomats should now head to the negotiating table with a stronger hand. They should work for a credible deal, a verifiable deal, and then present it to Congress to be judged. That is only ap-

propriate, given the incredible consequences for the region, for our allies, and for the national security of the United States.

I urge the passage of this legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill, H.R. 1191.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HEZBOLLAH INTERNATIONAL FINANCING PREVENTION ACT OF 2015

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2297) to prevent Hezbollah and associated entities from gaining access to international financial and other institutions, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2297

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title and table of contents.

Sec. 2. Statement of policy.

TITLE I—PREVENTION OF ACCESS BY HEZBOLLAH TO INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Sec. 101. Briefing on imposition of sanctions on certain satellite providers that carry al-Manar TV.

Sec. 102. Sanctions with respect to financial institutions that engage in certain transactions.

TITLE II—REPORTS ON DESIGNATION OF HEZBOLLAH AS A SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKER AND A SIGNIFICANT TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION

Sec. 201. Report on designation of Hezbollah as a significant foreign narcotics trafficker.

Sec. 202. Report on designation of Hezbollah as a significant transnational criminal organization.

Sec. 203. Rewards for Justice and Hezbollah’s fundraising, financing, and money laundering activities.

Sec. 204. Report on activities of foreign governments to disrupt global logistics networks and fundraising, financing, and money laundering activities of Hezbollah.

Sec. 205. Appropriate congressional committees defined.

TITLE III—MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 301. Rule of construction.

Sec. 302. Regulatory authority.

Sec. 303. Termination.

SEC. 2. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It shall be the policy of the United States to—

(1) prevent Hezbollah’s global logistics and financial network from operating in order to curtail funding of its domestic and international activities; and

(2) utilize all available diplomatic, legislative, and executive avenues to combat the global criminal activities of Hezbollah as a means to block that organization’s ability to fund its global terrorist activities.

TITLE I—PREVENTION OF ACCESS BY HEZBOLLAH TO INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

SEC. 101. BRIEFING ON IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS ON CERTAIN SATELLITE PROVIDERS THAT CARRY AL-MANAR TV.

Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and annually thereafter, the Secretary of State shall provide to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a briefing on the following:

(1) The activities of all satellite, broadcast, Internet, or other providers that knowingly provide material support to al-Manar TV, and any affiliates or successors thereof.

(2) With respect to all providers described in paragraph (1)—

(A) an identification of those providers that have been sanctioned pursuant to Executive Order No. 13224 (September 23, 2001); and

(B) an identification of those providers that have not been sanctioned pursuant to Executive Order No. 13224 and, with respect to each such provider, the reason why sanctions have not been imposed.

SEC. 102. SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAT ENGAGE IN CERTAIN TRANSACTIONS.

(a) PROHIBITIONS AND CONDITIONS WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN ACCOUNTS HELD BY FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Treasury, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State and in consultation with the heads of other applicable departments and agencies, shall prohibit, or impose strict conditions on, the opening or maintaining in the United States of a correspondent account or a payable-through account by a foreign financial institution that the Secretary determines, on or after the date of the enactment of this Act, engages in an activity described in paragraph (2).

(2) ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED.—A foreign financial institution engages in an activity described in this paragraph if the foreign financial institution—

(A) knowingly facilitates a significant transaction or transactions for Hezbollah;

(B) knowingly facilitates a significant transaction or transactions of a person designated for acting on behalf of or at the direction of, or owned or controlled by, Hezbollah;

(C) knowingly engages in money laundering to carry out an activity described in subparagraph (A) or (B);

(D) knowingly facilitates a significant transaction or transactions or provides significant financial services to carry out an activity described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C), including—

(i) facilitating a significant transaction or transactions; or

(ii) providing significant financial services that involve a transaction of covered goods; or

(E)(i) knowingly facilitates, or participates or assists in, an activity described in subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D), including by acting on behalf of, at the direction of, or as an intermediary for, or otherwise assisting, another person with respect to the activity described in any such subparagraph;

(ii) knowingly attempts or conspires to facilitate or participate in an activity described in subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D); or

(iii) is owned or controlled by a foreign financial institution that the Secretary finds knowingly engages in an activity described in subparagraph (A), (B), (C), or (D).

(3) PENALTIES.—The penalties provided for in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) shall apply to a person that violates, attempts to violate, conspires to violate, or causes a violation of regulations prescribed under paragraph (4) of this subsection to the same extent that such penalties apply to a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of such section 206(a).

(4) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall prescribe and implement regulations to carry out this subsection.

(b) WAIVER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State and in consultation with the heads of other applicable departments and agencies, may waive, on a case-by-case basis, the application of a prohibition or condition imposed with respect to a foreign financial institution pursuant to subsection (a) for a period of not more than 180 days, and may renew such waiver for additional periods of not more than 180 days, on and after the date that the Secretary of the Treasury, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State—

(A) determines that such a waiver is in the national security interests of the United States; and

(B) submits to the appropriate congressional committees a report describing the reasons for such determination.

(2) FORM.—The report required by paragraph (1)(B) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(c) PROVISIONS RELATING TO FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.—

(1) REPORT.—Not later than 45 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary of the Treasury shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that—

(A) identifies each foreign central bank that the Secretary determines engages in one or more activities described in subsection (a)(2)(D); and

(B) provides a detailed description of each such activity.

(2) SPECIAL RULE TO ALLOW FOR TERMINATION OF SANCTIONABLE ACTIVITY.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall not be required to apply sanctions to a foreign financial institution described in subsection (a) if the Secretary, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State and in consultation with the heads of other applicable departments and agencies, certifies in writing to the appropriate congressional committees that—

(A) such foreign financial institution—

(i) is no longer engaging in the activity described in subsection (a)(2); or

(ii) has taken and is continuing to take significant verifiable steps toward terminating the activity described in such subsection; and

(B) the Secretary has received reliable assurances from the government with primary jurisdiction over such foreign financial institution that such foreign financial institution

will not engage in any activity described in such subsection in the future.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In this section:

(A) ACCOUNT; CORRESPONDENT ACCOUNT; PAYABLE-THROUGH ACCOUNT.—The terms “account”, “correspondent account”, and “payable-through account” have the meanings given those terms in section 5318A of title 31, United States Code.

(B) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(i) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives; and

(ii) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate.

(C) COVERED GOODS.—The term “covered goods” has the meaning given the term in section 1027.100 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations.

(D) FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—The term “financial institution” means a financial institution specified in subparagraph (A), (B), (C), (D), (E), (F), (G), (H), (I), (J), (K), (M), (N), (P), (R), (T), (Y), or (Z) of section 5312(a)(2) of title 31, United States Code.

(E) FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTION; DOMESTIC FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—

(i) FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—The term “foreign financial institution” has the meaning of such term in section 1010.605 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations, and includes a foreign central bank.

(ii) DOMESTIC FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—The term “domestic financial institution” has the meaning of such term as determined by the Secretary of the Treasury.

(F) HEZBOLLAH.—The term “Hezbollah” means—

(i) any person—

(I) the property of or interests in property of which are blocked pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.); and

(II) who is identified on the list of specially designated nationals and blocked persons maintained by the Office of Foreign Asset Control of the Department of the Treasury as an agent, instrumentality, or affiliate of Hezbollah; and

(ii) the entity designated by the Secretary of State as a foreign terrorist organization pursuant to section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189).

(G) MONEY LAUNDERING.—The term “money laundering” means any of the activities described in paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of section 1956(a) of title 18, United States Code, with respect to which penalties may be imposed pursuant to such section.

(2) OTHER DEFINITIONS.—The Secretary of the Treasury may further define the terms used in this section in the regulations prescribed under this section.

TITLE II—REPORTS ON DESIGNATION OF HEZBOLLAH AS A SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKER AND A SIGNIFICANT TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION

SEC. 201. REPORT ON DESIGNATION OF HEZBOLLAH AS A SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKER.

(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a detailed report on whether Hezbollah meets the criteria for designation under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (21 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.) as a significant foreign narcotics trafficker, and if the President determines that Hezbollah does not meet such criteria, a detailed justification as to which criteria have not been met.

(b) FORM.—The report required by subsection (a) shall be transmitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

SEC. 202. REPORT ON DESIGNATION OF HEZBOLLAH AS A SIGNIFICANT TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) Hezbollah meets the criteria for designation as a significant transnational criminal organization under Executive Order No. 13581 (76 Fed. Reg. 44757); and

(2) the President should so designate Hezbollah as a significant transnational criminal organization.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to the appropriate committees of Congress a detailed report on whether the Hezbollah meets the criteria for designation as a significant transnational criminal organization under Executive Order No. 13581 (76 Fed. Reg. 44757), and if the President determines that Hezbollah does not meet such criteria, a detailed justification as to which criteria have not been met.

(2) FORM.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall be transmitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex.

SEC. 203. REWARDS FOR JUSTICE AND HEZBOLLAH'S FUNDRAISING, FINANCING, AND MONEY LAUNDERING ACTIVITIES.

(a) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that details actions taken by the Department of State through the Department of State rewards program under section 36 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act (22 U.S.C. 2708) to obtain information on fundraising, financing, and money laundering activities of Hezbollah and its agents and affiliates.

(b) BRIEFING.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and annually thereafter, the Secretary of State shall provide a briefing to the appropriate congressional committees on the status of the actions described in subsection (a).

(c) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate.

SEC. 204. REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS TO DISRUPT GLOBAL LOGISTICS NETWORKS AND FUNDRAISING, FINANCING, AND MONEY LAUNDERING ACTIVITIES OF HEZBOLLAH.

(a) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that includes—

(A) a list of countries that support Hezbollah, or in which Hezbollah maintains important portions of its global logistics networks;

(B) with respect to each country on the list required by subparagraph (A)—

(i) an assessment of whether the government of such country is taking adequate measures to disrupt the global logistics networks of Hezbollah within the territory of such country; and

(ii) in the case of a country the government of which is not taking adequate measures to disrupt such networks—

(I) an assessment of the reasons such government is not taking such adequate measures; and

(II) a description of measures being taken by the United States to encourage such government to improve measures to disrupt such networks;

(C) a list of countries in which Hezbollah, or any of its agents or affiliates, conducts significant fundraising, financing, or money laundering activities;

(D) with respect to each country on the list required by subparagraph (C)—

(i) an assessment of whether the government of such country is taking adequate measures to disrupt the fundraising, financing, or money laundering activities of Hezbollah and its agents and affiliates within the territory of such country; and

(ii) in the case of a country the government of which is not taking adequate measures to disrupt such activities—

(I) an assessment of the reasons such government is not taking such adequate measures; and

(II) a description of measures being taken by the United States to encourage such government to improve measures to disrupt such activities; and

(E) a list of methods that Hezbollah, or any of its agents or affiliates, utilizes to raise or transfer funds, including trade-based money laundering, the use of foreign exchange houses, and free-trade zones.

(2) FORM.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form to the greatest extent possible, and may contain a classified annex.

(3) GLOBAL LOGISTICS NETWORKS OF HEZBOLLAH.—In this subsection, the term “global logistics networks of Hezbollah”; “global logistics networks”, or “networks”; means financial, material, or technological support for, or financial or other services in support of, Hezbollah.

(b) BRIEFING ON HEZBOLLAH’S ASSETS AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO FUNDRAISING, FINANCING, AND MONEY LAUNDERING WORLDWIDE.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the heads (or their designees) of other applicable Federal departments and agencies shall provide to the appropriate congressional committees a briefing on the disposition of Hezbollah’s assets and activities related to fundraising, financing, and money laundering worldwide.

(c) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, and the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate.

SEC. 205. APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.

Except as otherwise provided, in this title, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Financial Services, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Finance, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate.

TITLE III—MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

SEC. 301. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act or any amendment made by this Act shall apply to the authorized intelligence activities of the United States.

SEC. 302. REGULATORY AUTHORITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall, not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, promulgate regulations as necessary for the implementation of this Act and the amendments made by this Act.

(b) NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS.—Not less than 10 days before the promulgation of regulations under subsection (a), the President shall notify the appropriate congressional committees (as such term is defined in section 203 of the proposed regulations and the provisions of this Act and the amendments made by this Act that the regulations are implementing.

SEC. 303. TERMINATION.

This Act shall terminate on the date that is 30 days after the date on which the President certifies to Congress that Hezbollah—

(1) is no longer designated as a foreign terrorist organization pursuant to section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189);

(2) is no longer listed in the Annex to Executive Order No. 13224 (September 23, 2001; relating to blocking property and prohibiting transactions with persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism); and

(3) poses no significant threat to United States national security, interests, or allies.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material they might wish for the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in very strong support of this measure, and I want to especially thank the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. MARK MEADOWS, along with Mr. TED DEUTCH of Florida and Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL of New York for their bipartisan leadership on this critically important issue.

Last July, the House passed legislation by a vote of 404–0. This was the bill that was passed by that measure, with a few tweaks, but 404–0. Unfortunately, the other body, the Senate, failed to take it up. The threat posed by Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies has only expanded since then, and now, Hezbollah is ascendant in the region.

Consider, now, Hezbollah’s arsenal aimed at Israel; that arsenal has exploded. I was in Haifa in 2006 as Hezbollah’s rockets rained down on that city, targeting civilian neighborhoods. Those Iranian and Syrian-made rockets were slamming into people’s

homes, and they were being targeted, and the hospital also was being targeted. Every rocket contained 90,000 ball bearings. The only intent was mass killing and maiming.

In the Rambam trauma hospital, I talked to many of the victims. There were 600 victims of these rockets in there, and that was nearly 10 years ago. At that time, Hezbollah started that effort with about 15,000 rockets at their disposal, and they fired close to 5,000 at civilian targets. That was their work.

Hezbollah has expanded its arsenal in size and in sophistication. By the way, it has been done at the behest of Iran. They have given these new rockets, with longer range, to Hezbollah. Now, they have an arsenal; the estimate is some 100,000 unguided rockets. It has also expanded its arsenal to include the sophisticated antiship and antiaircraft missiles and ground-to-ground rockets.

Hezbollah has been able to expand both its arsenal and activities, with Iranian backing, and its long-established worldwide network of members and supporters and sympathizers to provide this terrorist group financial and logistical and military and other types of support.

To cut the international support and reach of Hezbollah, to deny it the funds needed for its terrorist activities, we must effectively target its financial network. That is the goal of the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015.

This bill builds on the existing sanctions regime by placing Hezbollah’s sources of financing under additional scrutiny, particularly those resources outside of Lebanon, given that many Lebanese banks have stepped up their game to prevent money laundering.

In addition to targeting the terrorist organization’s diverse financial networks, the legislation also requires the U.S. Government to focus on Hezbollah’s global logistics network and its transnational organized criminal enterprises, including its vast drug smuggling operations.

The goal is to improve coordination and cooperation with allies and other responsible countries in confronting the increasing threat posed by Hezbollah, and I strongly urge my colleagues to support this critical measure.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2297, the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by, once again, thanking Chairman ROYCE for his thoughtfulness, his intellect, his bipartisanship. I agree with everything he said in his opening statement.

I want to also thank Representative DEUTCH, Representative MEADOWS, and Representative MENG for their hard work on this important legislation to sanction Hezbollah, Iran’s terrorist proxy.

Over a decade ago, I introduced and Congress passed into law the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, which was designed to end Syrian support for terrorism, including Hezbollah. I was proud to have that bill pass both Houses of Congress and signed into law by then-President Bush.

Now, Hezbollah is a more sophisticated terrorist organization, but their goals remain the same. They continue to support Iran's dangerous agenda throughout the region.

They have tipped the Syrian civil war in favor of Assad. Assad would most likely be losing or out of power by now if not for the fact that Hezbollah has come in from Lebanon into Syria to aid Assad in his murderous treachery against his own people, where hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians have perished.

He would not be in power today if it wasn't for Iran and if it wasn't for Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, fighting that civil war. He would be losing that civil war. It is Hezbollah that has propped him up and caused him to be ahead in that war.

When we debated the Corker-Cardin bill just before, I mentioned my concerns about a potential nuclear deal with Iran. At the top of their list is how sanctions relief will be handled and what Iran will do with a new influx of resources.

Iran is the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and its Quds Force sow instability throughout the region. Perhaps the most destructive has been Iran's support for Hezbollah.

Hezbollah, again, has prevented the people of Lebanon from building a better future. Hezbollah's support has allowed the Assad regime to cling to power, and Hezbollah has stockpiled tens of thousands of rockets on Israel's front doorstep.

What concerns me most is that Iran has been able to funnel resources to Hezbollah, despite the burden of the most crippling sanctions regime in history. What is going to happen if that pressure is lifted?

Well, we shouldn't wait to find out. Congress must act now to impose stronger sanctions on Hezbollah. We should choke them off from their Iranian patrons. This bill would give the administration every tool it needs to confront this dangerous group.

It would sanction foreign banks for knowingly doing business with Hezbollah. We need to send a clear message to companies getting tangled with this terrorist group: Walk away. Walk away, or face the consequences.

The bill would also shine a bright light on Al-Manar, Hezbollah's television station, itself a Specially Designated Terrorist Group. Hezbollah uses Al-Manar for logistical, propaganda, and fundraising purposes. It defies reason that this station is still carried by the satellite providers all over the world. We need to expose this pup-

pet organization and this dangerous organization for what it is.

We passed this bill in the last Congress by a vote of 404-0. Today, let's take another stand against the violence, murder, and terrorism that Hezbollah has sown in the region. It is time for an independent and free Lebanon. It is time for an end to terror and for a transition in Syria, and it is time for the threats against Israel to end.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Operations.

He is also the author of the prior year's legislation on this subject which passed with 404 votes, and he is a principal coauthor, along with Mr. TED DEUTCH, of this bill which we are bringing up today.

Mr. MEADOWS. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for his kind words and for his leadership because we would not be here today without the great work of the chairman; the ranking member, Mr. ELIOT ENGEL; and my good friend from Florida, TED DEUTCH, who has dropped everything to try to make sure that we address this critical issue.

Because of the incredible Department of Defense and the military men and women that we have serving the great American interests, many Americans believe that the terrorist organizations are poorly organized, they are rogue operations, and some, most of them believe that they are just thousands of miles away; yet terrorist organizations have been thriving for decades and have killed thousands of Americans.

□ 1400

These terrorists will be stopped one day, and hopefully today is the beginning of what we do to make sure that that happens.

With the growth of technology and globalization, Hezbollah has become elusive and has found ways to raise millions of dollars. You would think that it is just in some faraway place, but we find them as close as our own borders in this hemisphere and, indeed, in my home State of North Carolina.

We must do all that we can to cripple Hezbollah and send a message to other terrorist organizations that the United States will not back down. We will protect our people and our allies. We can do this today by enacting the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act.

This is more important today than ever before because, as we discuss this particular potential deal with Iran, what we do know is that, as sanctions are relieved, that money will flow. And because the real leader and founder of this vicious terrorist organization is really the Iranian regime, we must act

today, Madam Speaker, because we will save American lives, we will save allied lives, and we will stand with our greatest ally in the Middle East, Israel.

So I want to close by, indeed, thanking Chairman ED ROYCE for his willingness to engage with our leadership and for their decision to bring this to the floor in a very expeditious manner. I thank Chairman TOM PRICE of Georgia, Ms. GRACE MENG, Mr. LEE ZELDIN, along with Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL.

I would also like to give a thank-you to the Lebanese bankers because many would believe that everybody there is involved in this. We had credible Lebanese bankers who came in and said, "We want some help." We want to make sure that the good actors are rewarded and the bad actors are put away.

And finally, I would like to thank the staff that has worked incredibly hard—Matt Zweig, Ansley Rhyne, and Mira Resnick—from the Foreign Affairs Committee. They have worked very closely together to make this a good piece of legislation, one that will be a tool so that this administration can finally put the boot on the throat of Hezbollah and all like-minded terrorists.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTCH), who is also the ranking member of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank my friend for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the bipartisan Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015.

I would like to thank Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL for their leadership on this critical piece of national security legislation. I especially want to acknowledge the leadership of my friend from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) in championing this effort and diligently pushing to make sure that we have the opportunity to hear this important bill. And I want to thank Representatives MENG, ZELDIN, and TOM PRICE of Georgia for the key role that they have played in bringing this bill to the House floor.

Since its inception in 1982, Hezbollah has attacked American citizens: in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983, killing 63, including 17 Americans; in the U.S. Marine barracks bombing in October 1983, which killed 241 American and 58 French servicemen; in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut in 1984, which killed 24; in the hijacking of TWA flight 847 in 1985, in which a U.S. Navy diver was shot in the head and his body dumped on the tarmac; and in the Khobar Towers attack in Saudi Arabia in 1996 that killed 19 airmen.

Hezbollah has been a U.S.-designated terrorist organization since 1997. And while it claims to be a resistance group, it is a very dangerous terrorist

organization. It does not just attack Americans. It launches attacks not just on Israel. It attacks around the world.

It is responsible for the 1992 Israeli Embassy bombing in Argentina, which killed 29, and the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center that killed 85 people. It attacked a busload of tourists in Bulgaria in 2012. And since 2008, attacks plotted by Hezbollah have been foiled in Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.

In 2012, a Hezbollah plot to assassinate the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the United States right here in a Washington, D.C., restaurant was uncovered. This attack, had it gone forward, would have resulted in innocent civilian deaths here in our Nation's Capital.

Madam Speaker, today Hezbollah is helping Bashar al-Assad slaughter innocent civilians in Syria. Hezbollah's fighters and operatives are on the ground in Syria, propping up the Assad regime as it drops barrel bombs on Syrian towns and uses chlorine gas on its own people.

It is no secret that Hezbollah does Iran's bidding. Backed by millions of dollars from Iran, Hezbollah is keeping Assad's grip on power to preserve Iran's lifeline to its proxy.

This reign of terror must be stopped before it has the potential to become even stronger.

With Iranian support, Hezbollah has set up cells all around the world. It gets significant funding for its worldwide terror through its criminal activities, such as money laundering, narcotics trafficking, and the selling of counterfeit goods. And shockingly, it fund raises in communities all over Latin America and Europe.

This bill will take significant steps toward cutting off Hezbollah's global reach by imposing sanctions on those financial institutions that facilitate Hezbollah's activities. We can severely hamper its ability to move the funds needed to fund its terror campaigns.

This bill will also require the administration to look into satellite providers that continue to broadcast the Hezbollah-run Al-Manar television station. A terrorist organization should not be allowed to freely broadcast its propaganda and its messages of hate. In fact, more than 10 years ago, back in 2004, France's highest administrative court moved to ban Al-Manar, ruling that the Beirut-based outlet had repeatedly violated the country's hate laws and made anti-Semitic statements.

Our legislation would give Congress and the administration greater insight into Hezbollah's criminal activities by requiring reports on Hezbollah's narcotics trafficking and its transnational criminal network.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. ENGEL. I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. DEUTCH. It will also give us a clearer sense of Hezbollah's global

reach, as it requires reporting on what countries around the world are doing to disrupt Hezbollah's activities.

Madam Speaker, Hezbollah has destabilized the Middle East for over 30 years. It has been a significant and deadly threat to U.S. interests. It stands ready, with more than 100,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel, many capable of striking anywhere with high precision. This is one of the most deadly organizations in the world, and the U.S. must use all of its economic might to shut down Hezbollah's global operations.

Madam Speaker, people often ask what Congress can do to address the many dangers that we face in the world. This legislation is a step forward in protecting Americans and American interests and American lives. Similar legislation passed the House unanimously last year, and I urge my colleagues to again support this vitally important national security bill.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I thank Chairman ROYCE for the wonderfully bipartisan way in which he leads our committee, and I especially want to thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) for his incredible leadership on this important topic.

Madam Speaker, I rise in full support of this bill, to broaden sanctions against Hezbollah, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization.

The Iranian proxy, Hezbollah, has been responsible for propping up the murderous Assad regime in Syria. Hezbollah continues to be a major threat to our closest friend and ally, the Democratic Jewish State of Israel. Hezbollah and its patron Iran continue to seek ways to attack and undermine U.S. national security interests, especially with its increased presence in our own area, in the Western Hemisphere, and its increasing role in global narcotics trafficking.

Madam Speaker, one way we have of countering Hezbollah's illicit activities is by cutting off its major source of funding and support. Once the administration gives Iran a signing bonus of \$50 billion and lifts the sanctions against the regime, when this bad and dangerously weak nuclear deal gets signed, you can be sure, Madam Speaker, that the spigots will open and that money will flow directly to Hezbollah. So we must make sure that the administration fully and vigorously enforces these sanctions against Hezbollah and doesn't find any loophole or waive any of the provisions.

After seeing the administration's willingness to work with the Iranian regime and the Cuban regime, I might add, it wouldn't surprise me to see the administration take steps to follow the European Union and split Hezbollah

into a military and political wing to try to avoid these sanctions and appease the Iranian regime.

We all know, Madam Speaker, that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization and that there is no split among the terror group whatsoever. You cannot differentiate between its supposed wings. It is all one terrorist organization. That is why I strongly support this bill, and I call upon the President to do more to counter this threat from Iran and its proxy, Hezbollah.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MENG), a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Ms. MENG. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be a lead cosponsor of the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act. This legislation will broaden financial sector sanctions against Hezbollah, compel other critical designations against it, and target Hezbollah's media outlet Al-Manar.

A lot of work has gone into this bill over two Congresses, and we have worked hard, especially with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTCH), to ensure the inclusion of language that would disrupt Hezbollah's global logistics networks and its fundraising and money-laundering activities.

This section requires the Obama administration to shed light on those countries that either covertly or overtly enable any sort of Hezbollah activities within their borders. The provision is particularly important in the Hezbollah context because there are far too many countries that outwardly condemn Hezbollah's military and terrorist activities while privately fostering environments where Hezbollah can operate politically and financially. Well, no more, not if you want to do business with the United States.

This legislation is also timely because it sends a strong message to Iran that no matter what happens in relation to nuclear negotiations, the United States will aggressively counter its promotion of terror in the Middle East.

In the last decade, our sanctions policy has led the way in crippling rogue regimes and terrorist groups, and today we take a big step forward in crippling, among the worst of them all, Hezbollah.

I want to thank Chairman ROYCE, Ranking Member ENGEL, Mr. MEADOWS, and Mr. DEUTCH for their hard work, and my cosponsors, Mr. ZELDIN and Mr. TOM PRICE of Georgia.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN), a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, one of the principal cosponsors of this bill, and a leader in confronting Iran in its support for terrorism around the world.

Mr. ZELDIN. Madam Speaker, I thank Chairman ROYCE for his leadership on the Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as Ranking Member ENGEL, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. MEADOWS, Ms. MENG, and Mr. TOM PRICE of Georgia.

This has been a strong bipartisan effort that was started before I came to Congress this past January. Some of my fellow lead cosponsors on this bill have worked tirelessly over years.

America's greatness is nothing to apologize for. We are a great, free, exceptional nation. Being the leader of the free world is, this body, today, passing legislation, the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act, to tackle a rising threat in the Middle East and to United States interests all around the world. American leadership is on display here in the Halls of Congress.

Hezbollah has helped Assad fight Syrian rebels in that country. It is estimated that Iran has provided Hezbollah \$60 million to \$100 million per year in financial assistance.

The Dubai-based Gulf Research Center estimates Hezbollah's armed wing at about 1,000 full-time fighters and 6,000 to 10,000 volunteers. According to the Iranian Fars News Agency, Hezbollah has up to 65,000 fighters.

□ 1415

This legislation, H.R. 2297, addresses the need to pursue foreign banks that knowingly do business with entities that facilitate Hezbollah's activities. This legislation addresses the need to counter Hezbollah's other criminal enterprises, which include money laundering and counterfeiting of goods and pharmaceuticals.

Madam Speaker, this legislation helps address the need to obtain more information on Hezbollah's fundraising, financing, and money-laundering networks. It requires the administration to provide a comprehensive overview of countries supporting Hezbollah as well as those countries that aren't doing enough.

Again, I thank Chairman ROYCE for his leadership with this legislation, Mr. ENGEL, and my fellow co-lead sponsors as we tackle this rising tide of radical Islamic extremism in the Middle East with Hezbollah, Hamas, al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and ISIS. Every day, our 24-hour news cycle is dominated with our constituents watching, reading, and hearing about this threat that exists in the Middle East, understanding that if we do not defeat it overseas, we will be facing it here at home.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand with my fellow co-leads and my colleagues from both parties as American exceptionalism is on display here. I rise in support today, and I encourage my colleagues to vote for this legislation.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Madam Speaker, Hezbollah's actions in the Middle East and around the world have only added to the volatility that has plagued the region. Hezbollah's stockpile of rockets is growing on Israel's doorstep, threatening to "confront aggression at any time, any place, and in any form whatsoever." The irony is they are the ag-

gressors. Hezbollah fighters terrorize the people of Syria, serving as the only thing between Assad and his own demise. Hezbollah has made itself into a state within a state of Lebanon, denying the Lebanese people their right to self-determination.

Madam Speaker, it is time to redouble our efforts to stop Hezbollah from continuing its campaign of terror across the region. So I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation because it is so important. The United States has the clout to do so, and we should always let the people—the average people—know that the United States stands by them.

Hezbollah is one of the worst terrorist organizations. Hezbollah tries to terrorize Israel, but they have never succeeded and will never succeed, and they terrorize the people of Lebanon and Syria. We need to put an end to that. That is why this legislation is so important.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support it. I thank Chairman ROYCE once again for his leadership, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD), a member of the Committee on Financial Services, a cosponsor of the bill, and someone who has been relentless in warning about the threat of Iran and Hezbollah.

Mr. DOLD. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for your leadership and for yielding the time. I also want to thank Mr. MEADOWS, Mr. DEUTCH, and all those who have worked tirelessly on this bill.

The Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act is one that is important. We need to choke off funds to a well-known terrorist organization that has been engaged in terror for decades. We know a lot, Madam Speaker, and we have talked a lot about the threat of ISIS, what is going on in Syria, what is happening with Iran, Iran being the greatest state sponsor of terror in the world, using its proxies, one of which is Hezbollah. But I want to make sure that we are not losing sight of Hezbollah and the dangers that they pose. That is why this is such an important piece of legislation.

Hezbollah has killed Americans. They are one of the most deadly terrorist organizations in the world. They are a major threat not only to the United States; they are a threat to our one true ally in the Middle East, the State of Israel. The buildup of Hezbollah's rocket arsenal is a concern, Madam Speaker, to everyday Israelis, and it should be a concern for all of us.

As we think about terror and choking off that financing, it is absolutely critical that we speak with one clear voice here in the United States, that we focus on these cells, and that we focus on how Hezbollah is getting its resources. This is, again, another issue on which I am delighted that we are

working together in a bipartisan fashion because this is not about partisanship. This is about making sure that the world is a safer place and shining a light on terrorist organizations, Hezbollah being one of the worst.

Just last week, Madam Speaker, I was in Israel, and we went into the Golan. We went north to the border, and we looked off over the border, not only into Syria; we looked into Lebanon as well. We met with lone soldiers, members from Chicago who went over to Israel to join the IDF and fight, and they are terrified and prepared for attacks from Hezbollah.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. DOLD. Madam Speaker, this is an important bill, one that makes sure we do not lose sight of the threat posed by Hezbollah, and one that we have to make sure that we are vigilant, that we know where the resources are going.

This is a bill that, again, I want to thank the chairman for his leadership on, and I want to thank Mr. ENGEL, the ranking member, for his leadership, and TED DEUTCH, a good friend, and MARK MEADOWS for all that they are doing. This is something that, again, I encourage my colleagues in this body to come together and unite behind another unanimous vote to make sure the world knows that we will not sit idly by, that we will do everything in our power to make sure that we track down the funders of this terrorist organization to make sure that they do not have the tools necessary for a reign of terror on Israel and the West.

Mr. ROYCE. I yield myself such time as I may consume, Madam Speaker.

When we think about Hezbollah, we think about an organization that was once a limited regional threat. Today, it really is global. It is an organization conducting terrorist and criminal activities all over the world, one that has actively targeted the United States now, if we think about it, for 30 years. I think it shows no signs of letting up as Iran, the regime there, shows no signs in letting up in its support for Hezbollah.

So prior to the attacks of September 11, Iran's proxy was responsible for the largest number of American deaths by terrorist organizations up until that point when al Qaeda carried out that attack. This included the 1993 bombing of the United States Embassy in Beirut and the bombing of our United States Marine Corps barracks again that same year. Hezbollah was responsible for providing funding and weapons to Iraqi militias that killed hundreds of Americans in Iraq at the behest of Iran. Hezbollah is behind the Iranian-sponsored slaughter that is going on right now in Syria, and it is Hezbollah that is now not only on the northern border of Israel, but also, with the support from Iran, it is now up on the Golan Heights. It is now up just off the Golan Heights in Syria there.

Hezbollah is now involved in supporting the Iranian-supported Houthi takeover in Yemen. Hezbollah is a model; and as you heard the debate recently on the Internet, should the Hezbollah model be replicated not only among the Shia Houthi but in other parts of the region, we must remember that any sanctions relief that we provide to Iran for a nuclear agreement will have an impact on Iran's ability to further support Hezbollah and the ability of that organization to carry out future attacks on Americans, on our allies, or on other unfortunate souls who oppose an Iranian takeover of that region.

Yet Hezbollah and their sponsor remain vulnerable. They are still reliant on Iran's largesse and on proceeds from Hezbollah's illicit activities. It is precisely those illicit activities, those vulnerabilities, that we must target. So, Madam Speaker, passing the Iran and the Hezbollah bills today will be a one-two punch against terrorists backing Iran's nuclear weapons drive.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of the Members to support this measure. Again, I thank Mr. ELIOT ENGEL for his work and the other cosponsors of the bill as well.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2297.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

PROVIDING FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1735, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

Mr. BYRNE. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 260 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 260

Resolved, That at any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for further consideration of the bill (H.R. 1735) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes. No further general debate shall be in order.

SEC. 2. (a) In lieu of the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Armed Services now printed in the bill, it shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 114-14.

That amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against that amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived.

(b) No amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute made in order as original text shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution and amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution.

(c) Each amendment printed in the report of the Committee on Rules shall be considered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

(d) All points of order against amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules or against amendments en bloc described in section 3 of this resolution are waived.

SEC. 3. It shall be in order at any time for the chair of the Committee on Armed Services or his designee to offer amendments en bloc consisting of amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution not earlier disposed of. Amendments en bloc offered pursuant to this section shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services or their respective designees, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole.

SEC. 4. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the amendment in the nature of a substitute made in order as original text. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Alabama is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. BYRNE. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. McGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

□ 1430

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BYRNE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

Mr. BYRNE. Madam Speaker, H. Res. 260 provides a structured rule for consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016. It is my privilege to present this rule to the House as a member of the Rules

Committee. It is also my privilege to do so as a member of the committee of jurisdiction over this bill, the House Armed Services Committee.

The Rules Committee received a record number of amendments to the bill; heard nearly 6 hours of testimony from our colleagues; and, in this rule, have made in order 135 amendments for consideration on the House floor.

As is traditional, the rule gives the chair of the Armed Services Committee authority to offer such amendments en bloc to facilitate consideration of such a large number of amendments.

This is a good rule that helps pave the way for the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act. This law, this bill, governs the defense of the United States of America, provides for the servicemen and -women that defend this country. It is the single most important function of this House.

We are going to hear spirited debate today, but we need to make sure, as we hear this debate, that we focus on what we are here about, and that is to defend the people of the United States. While there are other things that may be brought up that are important and good, they are not about the defense of the United States and would not be in order for this bill.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I have followed this bill from the start. Counting the Rules Committee hours and the hours in committee, I have personally spent over 25 hours in debate on this bill.

This has been an incredibly open process: 335 amendments were filed at the Armed Services Committee level; 211 amendments were adopted by the House Armed Services Committee in markup, including 96 Democrat amendments; 135 amendments were made in order by the rule—69 of those are Democrat or bipartisan amendments. That is over 450 amendments that have been considered since we started this process.

The National Defense Authorization Act has a history of bipartisanship, which is only appropriate on the single most important thing that we do, defending the people of the United States.

It passed out of the Committee on Armed Services on a vote of 60–2. It has been completed every year since 1962 on a bipartisan basis. That is 53 straight years, and we need to make it 54.

This bill is vitally important to our country. For the first time in a long time, Americans are ranking national security as their number one concern, even ahead of the economy.

Former CIA leader Mike Morell said he has never seen more threats to our country at any other time in his 33 years in the business. Most alarmingly, he says that we are at risk of another attack here in the United States. Our military men and women need this bill to do their job and help keep us safe.