

most populated and developed parts of Syria. It is an area where Syria's already poor economy probably now has a GDP around 20% of what it was in 2011 and has no clear basis for recovery. It is an area where no top down negotiation between Assad or his backers and any outside faction can begin to put even one Humpty back together again.

THE ASSAD FACTION(S)

The fourth version of Humpty is the group of factions and fighters supporting Assad. It is important to note that this is not a unified group. No one has given most of those in the area Assad control a choice as to who controls them. The majority of the population is Sunni and other non-Alawites. The Alawites are not Shi'ite, and are a gnostic religious group that may have political ties to Iran and the Hezbollah, but Alawites are not Muslims in the normal sense of the term.

There are no reliable data on Syria's population. The CIA estimates, however, that some 17-18 million people remain in Syria, it estimates that 87% are Muslim (official; includes 74% Sunni 74% and 13% that are a mix of Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia). Some 10% are Christian (includes Orthodox, Uniate, and Nestorian), and the final 3% are Druze and some small number of Jews who remain in Damascus and Aleppo).

If one looks at the maps of Syria's sectarian and ethnic divisions before the fighting, they are also distributed into a series of small enclaves, many near the coast. They have no clear "region," and it is far from clear how many of the Sunnis in the regular Syrian forces, the real Shi'ites and other minorities in Syria, or the more secular Sunni businesspersons and civilians would support either Assad or any mix of Assad supporters if they had a choice.

It is also important to note that the World Bank rated the Assad regime as having some of the worst governance in the world before the uprising began in 2011. It was also rated as deeply corrupt. Transparency International rated it as the 159th most corrupt country in the world—out of 175—in 2014. The Arab and UN development reports warned that the younger Assad was no better in moving the country towards real economic development than his father, and that the massive population increase in Syria had created a "youth bulge" for which there were often no real jobs.

The Syrian GDP per capita was at best around \$5,100 even in Purchasing Power Parity P terms in 2011 before the upheavals began—and ranked a dismal 165th in the world. It now may average half that level. Some 33% of the population is 0-14 years of age; 14% is 15-24, and over 500,000 young Syrian men and women now reach job age each year in a country where direct (ignoring disguised) unemployment is estimated to be 33-35%, and the poverty level was well over 12% before the fighting started.

A TIME FOR HONESTY, TRANSPARENCY, AND REALISM

One cannot ignore trees, anymore than one can ignore the forest. The failure of U.S. policy and military efforts, Russian and Iranian support of Assad and major Russian military intervention, and the conflicting ways in which other states intervene will all make things worse. The impact of religious warfare and extremism, and failed Syrian secularism, are even more serious problems.

It is time, however, to stop focusing on either ISIS or Assad, to pretend that Syrian "moderates" are strong enough to either affect the security situation or negotiate for Syria's real fighters, and act as if a shattered nation could be united by some top down negotiation between groups that hate each other and have no competence in dealing with the economic, social, and governance challenges Syria now faces.

The first step in solving a problem is to honestly assess it. No negotiation can work that does not deal with grim realities and divisions created by years of fighting. No amount of U.S. and Russian intervention and argument can bring security or stability. No UN effort at conventional negotiation can survive encounter with reality, and no effort of any kind that does not address the sheer scale of Syrian recovery and reconstruction.

Ms. KAPTUR. Anthony Cordesman, probably one of the most respected thinkers on this subject, ends a very significant analysis of the situation in Syria and greater Europe with this admonition. He tells America: "We face a moment of facing up to honesty, transparency, and realism."

And he tells us, "One cannot ignore trees anymore than one can ignore the forest," related to Syria. "The failure of U.S. policy and military efforts, Russian and Iranian support of Assad and major Russian military intervention, and the conflicting ways in which other states intervene will all make matters worse. The impact of religious warfare and extremism, and failed Syrian secularism, are even more serious problems.

"It is time, however, to stop focusing on either ISIS or Assad, to pretend that Syrian 'moderates' are strong enough to either affect the security situation or negotiate for Syria's real fighters, and act as if a shattered nation could be united by some top-down negotiation between groups that hate each other and have no competence in dealing with the economic, social, and governance challenges Syria now faces.

"The first step in solving a problem is to honestly assess it. No negotiation can work that does not deal with grim realities and divisions created by years of fighting. No amount of U.S. and Russian intervention and argument can bring security or stability. No U.N. effort at conventional negotiation can survive encounter with reality, and no effort of any kind that does not address the sheer scale of Syrian recovery and reconstruction" can work.

I commend his writings to my colleagues and the major studies that have been done this year by the Center for Strategic and International Studies as providing a glimmer of the road that we must walk toward.

I want to just thank my colleagues for the opportunity to place this in the RECORD tonight.

I want to thank the Syrian Americans that live in northern Ohio for their patriotic citizenship and their deep concern about what more the United States of America could do to bring resolution to this deeply troubling conflict in Syria that has precipitated such unrest, not just through that region but, indeed, to all of greater Europe.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

PRESIDENTIAL VETO OF NDAA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. EMMER of Minnesota). Under the

Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Fifty-three years ago is a long time. In 1962, John F. Kennedy was President. Gas was 28 cents a gallon. The first Walmart opened. The U.S. Navy SEALs were created, and the Cuban Missile Crisis was on everyone's minds.

Now, we have gone through a lot as a nation since then, but one thing has remained constant: the U.S. Congress and the President of the United States have fulfilled one of our primary obligations according to the Constitution of providing for the common defense by passing a National Defense Authorization Act. You may say that Congress hasn't always passed legislation that is needed, but on the National Defense Authorization Act, we have gotten it right. For 53 years in a row now, our Nation's national security needs have been taken care of.

Sadly, that might not be the case this year. The reason? Not because the Representatives of the people did not do their work. It is because the Commander in Chief has chosen to use the military as political pawns to advance his domestic agenda by choosing to veto the NDAA.

Never before in our Nation's history has a President vetoed the National Defense Authorization Act in order to leverage concessions on other areas of government spending. Let me say that again. President Obama's veto stems not from defense policy but, rather, from his desire for more domestic spending unrelated to national defense. This is unprecedented.

Four times during the past 53 years, Presidents have vetoed the NDAA, but it was over specific defense-related provisions in the NDAA itself. Differences were able to be worked out with Congress and concerns quickly addressed so the bill could move forward and our men and women in uniform would have the tools, equipment, and resources they need to keep us safe. Not this year.

Just minutes ago, our President vetoed our Nation's most important bill, which provides for full funding for our military.

Let me share with you what provisions are in this bill and why it is so important. It provides: a 1.3 percent pay raise for our troops; retirement benefits for the 83 percent of our troops who currently see none; the authority for commanders to allow soldiers to

carry guns on base to defend themselves, their colleagues in arms, and their families; vital resources and new tools to combat cyber attacks on our critical infrastructure; restrictions on Guantanamo detainee transfers to address the potential illegality of the President's previous unilateral transfers; 12 new F-18 Super Hornets to be built in my home State of Missouri; \$300 million of assistance in lethal aid so the people of Ukraine can defend themselves; \$330 million in funding for the iron dome missile defense system for Israel; and it directs the deployment of a new advanced ballistic missile defense system to defend against the threat of an Iranian intercontinental ballistic missile.

In short, at home and abroad, the NDAA ensures our military has funding for national defense and overseas operations. These are the selfless individuals who we rely upon for our safety and freedom that we are talking about. And in a strongly bipartisan fashion, Congress has authorized that funding at the exact level that the President requested.

In this unprecedented move, the Commander in Chief is using the very troops he commands as pawns in a very dangerous political game. It is wrong to add to the uncertainty our men and women in uniform face as they stand on the front lines of an increasingly uncertain world.

Let us remember, the President recently made a decision to keep almost 10,000 of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines in Afghanistan. On the heels of such a serious decision, asking them to leave their families and lives on hold for another year or more, how could he justify not signing the bill that provides the pay and benefits for our troops?

I am thankful for my colleagues who stand with me here today to tell you why this is such a critical piece of legislation and why this veto cannot stand. We are here to make sure the men and women who put themselves in harm's way for our freedom are a priority to our Nation and not held hostage to political games.

With that, I yield to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. BRIDENSTINE), a Navy veteran and currently lieutenant commander in the United States Navy Reserve.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) for all her hard work on these issues.

Just as a point of maybe disagreement, I am no longer in the Navy Reserve. I joined the Oklahoma National Guard, and I will be flying with the Oklahoma Air National Guard.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for hosting this Special Order, and I would like folks to understand really what my friend from Missouri just said.

The President of the United States vetoed the Defense Authorization because he wants more spending for other

domestic programs. This is unprecedented and, quite frankly, it is scary for this country. I am still dumbfounded by it, that you are going to hold defense hostage for a domestic agenda. We don't do that in the United States of America. This President somehow doesn't understand that you don't take the defense of this country hostage for a domestic agenda, and yet that is what he has just done.

I want to share with my colleagues why we do an authorization every year, because the world changes. Things get more dangerous year after year after year.

As a Navy pilot and now as a National Guard pilot, we utilize space. I am on the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee. We hear all kinds of things about space.

I can tell you, as somebody who has used it, we use space for over-the-horizon communications with our space-based communication architecture. We use it for weather so that we can make sure we can get to the target on time. We use it for intelligence. We use it for missile warning. We use it for a whole host of things: the position, navigation, timing, our GPS satellites, for actually hitting our targets.

Space is critical, yet something has changed drastically in the last few years. The Russians have been launching various things that were not registered with the International Telecommunication Union, the ITU.

□ 1730

What are we discovering that these objects are doing? Well, they are doing very sophisticated co-orbital maneuvers, demonstrating that they can do proximity and rendezvous operations, which means—guess what—ultimately that could be an antisatellite capability.

Friends, if we lose our satellites, we could have even more risk. Imagine your ATM not working. Imagine the food in the grocery store not being there when you go shopping. National security in this country is critically important, and the President is holding it hostage for a different domestic agenda that has absolutely nothing to do with national security. This is absolute craziness.

So what did we do in the NDAA? We plussed up spending on space protection, which is critically important; and we not only plussed up spending on space protection, but we provided authorities, critically necessary authorities so the Department of Defense can actually protect this country in ways that it hasn't had the opportunity to do so before.

For our communications architecture, we are doing Pathfinder programs, and we are purchasing communications in space in ways that we have never done it before. Why? Because we need to distribute the architecture so it complicates the targeting solution for our enemies. We are not doing this

because it is fun or because we like it. We are doing it because it is critical for national security.

When the President of the United States vetoes it, it puts all of us in jeopardy. I want to be clear. This is about the troops, there is no doubt about that, but when we are talking about somebody's ATM working, this is about the security of the United States of America, and the President is holding it hostage for a domestic agenda.

When it comes to the troops, just a few items. We talk about the authorities in the NDAA. Well, those of us who have served understand that there are special pays that we receive: combat pay, hazardous duty pay, bonuses for reenlistments, flight pay for those of us who fly. There are pays that are going to be in jeopardy now that otherwise wouldn't be in jeopardy.

By the way, a lot of these pays are for people who are right now serving this country overseas. Do we not understand that, Mr. President? I should say, Mr. Speaker, the President should understand that.

This is a momentous day in American history and not for good reasons—for tragic reasons.

I would like to thank my colleague from Missouri for hosting this Special Order and giving somebody like me and all these colleagues behind me the opportunity to make sure that America understands what is at stake here. The gentlewoman's leadership on these issues is critical, and America is in jeopardy.

We need to understand what happened today is not the norm. It must not be the norm, and future Presidents must never hold hostage American national security for a domestic agenda.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Mr. BRIDENSTINE for his service to our Nation and his firsthand perspective on how vital this is and what a tragic day it is for our Nation that our Commander in Chief would do this.

Now I would like to turn to another friend and hero to our Nation in many ways, who served both in the Army and the Marine Corps, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN).

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Missouri, VICKY HARTZLER, for her leadership on the Armed Services Committee and on this critical issue.

I rise today in strong support of the National Defense Authorization Act, and I urge my colleagues to override President Obama's veto. This bipartisan bill provides essential pay and benefits to the men and women serving in our military today. Expanded retirement options for our troops, greater protections against sexual assault in the military, and increased cybersecurity defense funding are among some of the most important authorizations included in the NDAA.

For the Sixth Congressional District of Colorado, the NDAA also contains provisions and language that help

Buckley Air Force Base. Buckley not only plays a critical role in our Nation's defense, but it is the largest employer in my district.

Finally, the NDAA also includes language to prevent the transfer of GTMO detainees to U.S. soil. Last week, a delegation from the administration surveyed potential locations for GTMO detainees in Colorado. Along with most Coloradans, I remain adamantly opposed to this move and strongly support the language in the NDAA. There is absolutely no reason to close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp only to finance the incarceration of enemy combatants in the United States.

This legislation is too important to our Nation and to Colorado to become the subject of political games by the White House. Once again, this bill must become law, and I urge my colleagues in the House to override the President's veto.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, Mr. COFFMAN made several excellent points, not only about the importance to Colorado, but certainly to our Nation. He raised a very important point that hasn't been brought up yet: how it prevents the transfer of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay from coming to our soil; and that is what the administration wants to do is to put them in our backyards and our prisons, and we do not support that, and this NDAA prevents that.

Now I would like to turn to another friend and colleague from the Armed Services Committee, Mr. WILSON. He is quite a hero to this Nation in many ways, but certainly having four sons who have served in the military is one of his major contributions. We are so proud of him and his family and his service.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. I thank Congresswoman VICKY HARTZLER for her leadership for military families, and I thank her for referencing my four sons. Of course, I want to give all credit to my wife, Roxanne. She did a great job raising four sons who truly know how important it is to serve our country.

Sadly, President Obama has vetoed this year's National Defense Authorization Act, even though it allocates the same amount of funding as the Department of Defense request that he made himself. The President does not support the bipartisan NDAA because it utilizes wartime funds. Despite utilizing these funds himself, the President accepted this fabrication to veto the NDAA and put servicemembers, military families, and veterans at risk.

On October 3, The Washington Post editorialized: "Refusing to sign this bill would make history, but not in a good way. Mr. Obama should let it become law."

I believe the veto underscores the President's legacy of weakness. This is leading to instability. It is leading to aggression, mass murders, and it is leading to citizens fleeing the violence causing children to drown at sea.

This year's NDAA provides for servicemembers and equips our troops to fight serious threats to American families, like the murderous Islamic State. It supports our allies, like Ukraine and Israel, to defend themselves from aggression. The NDAA establishes meaningful reforms to the Department of Defense acquisition process and creates commonsense improvements to the military retirement system. It fully staffs and resources Cyber Command, which I appreciate as chairman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, to protect American families.

American families deserve peace through strength. The National Defense Authorization Act gives our military critical resources to defend us as we constantly face new threats. It is sad for the President to weaken these reforms and funds and put American families at risk.

Fellow Members, I strongly urge you to override the President's veto. As the appreciative son of a World War II Flying Tigers veteran, as a 31-year veteran of the Army myself, and as the grateful father of four sons serving in the military, I know firsthand that your bipartisan vote will help protect and better serve our troops, military families, veterans, and all American families by promoting and ensuring peace through strength.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I really appreciate the gentleman's service to this Nation as a 31-year veteran; but also serving as chairman of the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, he has a unique perspective on the inherent dangers facing our Nation now that our President has vetoed this important bill. I thank him for sharing his insights.

Now I will yield to another member of the Armed Services Committee, but more than that, he is a decorated Navy SEAL, and I look forward to hearing his thoughts on this very important moment in our Nation's history. I turn to the gentleman from Montana (Mr. ZINKE).

Mr. ZINKE. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in opposition to the President's veto and ask my colleagues to override it. I come before this body not only as a Representative of the great State of Montana, but also a former commander of SEAL Team Six and a former deputy- and acting commander of Naval Special Warfare's efforts in the Persian Gulf.

The job of the Commander in Chief is bound by the Constitution to support the troops, to be the leader, and yet this President vetoes a bipartisan bill to defend our country.

I talk not only as a former commander, but also a father. My daughter is a Navy diver, and my son-in-law is an Active-Duty Navy SEAL. My wife watched her daughter, her husband, and her son-in-law all deploy.

I have seen the consequences of war. I am probably the last individual that would advocate for war. I have seen the

consequences and the pain. But when we go to war, the Commander in Chief is obligated to make sure we go to war to win. He has to make sure that our troops have the right training, the right equipment, the right leadership to win decisively on the field of battle. Before this Commander in Chief sends them into harm's way, it is his obligation and duty to make sure that we know the conditions to bring them home.

His actions today are a dereliction of his duty. It affects every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine in harm's way. A veto and the subsequent continuing resolution causes harm to our troops. I call it garrisoning, where our troops don't train, our fleet can't go in and receive the maintenance necessary. Above all, it gives a message to the troops that are in harm's way that their Commander in Chief does not have their back.

This isn't a Republican or Democratic issue. This is an American issue, because it is America's sons and daughters that we put in harm's way. It is the obligation of a great nation to make sure when we do that we give them everything they need to come home safely.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I don't know of a more articulate way to say how important and imperative it is that we override this veto. I thank Mr. ZINKE for sharing his very real and heartfelt and expert thoughts on this issue.

Now I have a friend who is going to share who is passionate about lots of things and competent on many issues, but I tell you, serving on Armed Services Committee with the gentlewoman from Indiana, JACKIE WALORSKI, I can tell you her main passion is for the men and women in uniform, for our national defense.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Indiana.

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman and my friend from Missouri, VICKY HARTZLER.

The NDAA, as we have heard tonight, is the largest single authorization bill that Congress considers and one of this body's most significant pieces of legislation and accomplishments this year. This legislation is critical to our national security. It continues to fund the entire national defense of this country.

For 54 years, Republicans and Democrats in both Houses in this body have come together to pass this defense bill. This year was no different. This Congress sent a bipartisan bill to President Obama. Today, though, the President vetoed this defense budget in order to gain leverage for additional increased spending, his demands of spending, a process of a budgetary procedure that is completely unrelated to this bill.

This defense bill helps our men and women in uniform by adjusting pay and retirement benefits. It removes barriers that prevent access to urgent

medical care for members of the armed services while also expanding employment opportunities for those exiting the service. It helps us retain our most experienced servicemembers. It makes those individuals safer by enhancing and improving military training and modernizing our resources and programs.

Lastly, this bill provides very real authorities, such as the ability to protect Americans by keeping terrorists secured in the detention facility known as GTMO, or Guantanamo Bay. For 54 years, this defense bill has transited party lines and Washington dysfunction. As a candidate, President Obama promised to do the same. But with this veto, he has threatened to end this staple of bipartisanship in this Chamber.

Our servicemen and -women put their lives on the line every day. The least we can do is offer them the security of knowing that they can provide for their families and plan for their own futures.

□ 1745

Mrs. HARTZLER. I thank the gentlewoman. I appreciate that.

Next we have another member of the Armed Services Committee, who is a decorated Army commander, who led soldiers in Iraq, and whose unit was responsible for finding Saddam Hussein, to share his thoughts on this day when the President has vetoed the NDAA and why it is so important that we override this veto.

I yield to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. RUSSELL).

Mr. RUSSELL. I thank the gentlewoman from Missouri for all of her hard work on the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I served my country 21 years in the Infantry in the United States Army and have deployed operationally to Kosovo, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq.

As a combat Infantry veteran, I know firsthand the hardships and dangers that our warriors face. The question that we have to ask is: Why has the President increased the hardship and danger to our troops? Has he forgotten that we have troops in the field that are still fighting?

Has he forgotten that he has committed to contingency operations that created new hardships, new deployments, unscheduled training, unscheduled maintenance? And now, after asking them to turn everything on their heads, he is not even going to support it.

A Presidential veto blocks needed funds for our ongoing combat operations and for our emergency operations and contingencies.

The President claims that we need to do this right; yet, he has created the foreign policy mess that has required our troops to deploy on contingencies and then has asked this body to get additional Congressional authorization for those efforts. And now he adds to their burden.

The veto eliminates crucial planning time just for normal peacetime operations in training from 3 to 6 months, forcing the military to waste millions of dollars as they play a catch-up game, usually in the spring, by having to deal with such efforts to try to make up for lost time.

The veto reduces certainty in our overall national security posture. The veto also blocks a revised retirement program benefiting 83 percent of our warriors that are not currently covered, and it denies expanded access to health care and blocks access to needed drugs.

It continues to leave our warriors defenseless at recruiting stations, camps, posts, and bases by denying their ability to carry firearms in their defense against terror threats.

The veto also blocks a mediocre pay raise that the President himself already reduced by 1 percent, and now they will not even get that pathetic 1 percent pay raise, 1.3 percent.

Mr. Speaker, a Presidential veto makes one thing crystal clear: Nothing is too good for our troops and nothing is what he is going to give them. That is why we will fight to overturn this veto, so that he can hear the people of the United States and our constitutional requirement to defend this republic.

We will overturn this veto, and we ask, Mr. Speaker, that the Nation join us in this fight.

I thank the gentlewoman from Missouri.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I couldn't agree more with the gentleman. Thank you for your leadership, service to our country, and your call for the American people to join us and come alongside us as we fight for the defense of our Nation and for the men and women in uniform.

The thing that I feel is so important tonight is that the American people and everyone here in the House has had an opportunity to hear from people who not only care about their Nation, who are today's patriots, but many of them who have either served themselves on the front line and who have experienced danger and put themselves in harm's way because of it or they have family members that they are supporting in that line of duty.

Our next speaker I want to turn to is certainly one of those, not only a colleague on the Armed Services Committee, but a father who has three sons who are serving in the military, and he knows firsthand the dangers, the sacrifice, and how important this NDAA is to our Nation.

I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. NUGENT).

Mr. NUGENT. Congresswoman HARTZLER, I really appreciate you taking the time to do this today on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, it is an outrage that the President would veto, as the Commander in Chief of our military in general.

Think about this. I have three sons that have served in the military, that currently serve in United States Army, that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, that have done trips to Haiti to help during reconstruction as it related to an earthquake.

The President of the United States has made them political pawns.

One of the things that my wife and I felt when they were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan was that they were the best equipped, best led, best trained troops on the face of the earth. By vetoing the National Defense Authorization Act, we are putting a dagger in the heart of what we are supposed to be holding up.

The Constitution of the United States says that this Congress has the obligation to stand up an Army, to stand up a Navy, to support the President of the United States and the actions that we must take to protect this Nation.

The actions today are strictly a political action when you do a press conference to hold up the fact that he vetoed the National Defense Authorization Act.

You have heard so many members here today talk about the things that this act did or does. And so I call upon all of our friends across the aisle. Democrats, unite with us to overturn this veto because we live in the most dangerous of times.

Go back in time. I can't think of a time—I don't know if you can—where it has been more dangerous in regards to a resurgent Russia, to China, to Iran, to North Korea, to all of the non-state actors out there that are threatening this Nation and our friends and allies around the world.

This is not the time to play political brinksmanship with our military. This is a time to hold them up, lift them up, and let them do their job and know that their Commander in Chief has their back.

I truly do appreciate, Mrs. HARTZLER, your doing this.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Mr. NUGENT. I just thought it was so important that you shared, as a parent. I have heard you say this before in committee, that, as a parent, it is vital for you and your wife to know that you are sending the best equipped, best trained force possible over into harm's way so, when you send your sons, you know that they are going to be able to come back safe.

Mr. NUGENT. People forget that there is actually flesh and blood, parents and children, of those young men and women that are serving this country. They forget there are real people in those uniforms. And so that is why this is so important.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Absolutely. And what message is that sending to them right now? Thank you.

Now I would like to turn to Representative DOUG LAMBORN, my friend from Colorado, who has the privilege and does such a great job representing

one of the most military-intense districts in the country. I had the opportunity to visit the Air Force Academy around Memorial Day. I appreciate your leadership on this issue.

I yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN) for whatever he would like to share.

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the gentlewoman from Missouri for her leadership.

Mr. Speaker, today's veto from the President breaks dangerous new ground for callous disregard for the needs of our men and women in uniform.

While he worked so hard to make sure that the Iranian military had the funding they needed via his disastrous nuclear deal, today he chose to willfully disregard the needs of our own military to make a political point with his veto.

The Presidency has sunk to a new low today. For the first time in history, an American President has vetoed a defense bill because of issues that the bill itself cannot possibly address.

Most of us here in Congress agree that defending our Nation is the first and most important priority, a sacred constitutional duty we have to protect the American people and to keep us safe in an increasingly dangerous world.

Tragically, President Obama is willing to hold defense hostage to try to get more money for agencies like the IRS and the EPA, all of this while we remain at war with extremist groups like al Qaeda and ISIS that want to attack America, all of this while we still are having troops killed overseas, including some from Colorado.

This is pretty simple, really. This administration wants to cut our military and increase spending almost everywhere else. Our troops have already endured massive cuts similar in size to the Clinton drawdown in the nineties, although this time global threats are rising, not falling.

On top of all this, the President wants to send Guantanamo detainees to U.S. soil, including to my own district in Colorado, and is also issuing his veto for this reason.

Look, terrorists will find a reason to hate us no matter what happens in Guantanamo.

I ask my colleagues: Are we willing to let this happen on our watch?

To my fellow Republicans who are rightly concerned about out-of-control Federal spending and an out-of-control Federal debt, please hear me when I say we are working on real reform and real accountability for the large defense budget.

But please also hear me when I say that defense is simply not the driver of our debt, especially over the long term. Defense spending ensures and protects our way of life.

I strongly urge my colleagues to do the right thing for our military and the right thing for America: override Presi-

dent Obama's reckless and truly dangerous veto.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I thank the gentleman so much because he raises a very good point as far as spending goes in that this bill, the NDAA, provides the exact amount of funding for our defense that the President requested.

Mr. LAMBORN. Down to the penny.

Mrs. HARTZLER. We worked hard to come up with that, but we made sure that our troops had the funding they need. And, yet, as the Commander in Chief, he requested \$612 billion. We gave him \$612 billion in this bill, and then he vetoes it.

Mr. LAMBORN. It makes no sense. It is dangerous, and he is doing it for political reasons that can't be solved in this bill.

Mrs. HARTZLER. You are exactly right. Thank you for your comments.

Now I have a gentleman from Georgia that I have been privileged to be elected with in 2010 and serve alongside in both Agriculture Committee and Armed Services. I believe he is one of the most hardworking members on Armed Services.

If you are his constituent, I want you to know he is at every hearing. He does his homework. And I appreciate him coming out tonight to share his thoughts on the NDAA.

I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT).

Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia. I want to thank you, Mrs. HARTZLER, for what you have done here.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to discuss what has happened here today. As we talked earlier today, I honestly thought there was a chance that we wouldn't be here speaking about this. I thought that maybe this one time our Commander in Chief would do what was right.

I hope you will take an opportunity to look at the news. I am looking at it right now.

Obama to hold photo op to veto defense bill. Obama plans to hold a photo op in the Oval Office when he uses his veto pen on the National Defense Authorization Act, according to his public schedule.

Ladies and gentlemen, when I am around the District, I hear a lot of complaints: Why can't Congress just work together? Why can't you get along?

The National Defense Authorization Act came out of the Armed Services Committee 60-2, 60-2. There was one Democrat and one Republican that voted against the bill; 60-2.

It came through the House. A significant majority voted for the National Defense Authorization bill on the floor. It passed out of the Senate with over 70 votes.

When I am talking to Americans, I have used this as an example of how not everything you see in the press is true, that there are issues like national security that the Democrats and the Republicans in Washington, D.C., absolutely take very seriously, and when it

comes to the well-being of our men and women that serve the country and their families and making sure that they have the training and the equipment that they need, that this is an example of how we are able to put partisanship aside and work in the best interest of everybody in the country, most especially those that serve so honorably.

And the President held a photo op to veto the bill.

I want to thank my fellow colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, for their work on this bill. Certainly I supported it. I continue to support it.

I think one of the things that continues to be mentioned and needs to be mentioned over and over and over again is the President got the total of what he asked for with regard to the authorization of the funds for carrying out the fight against ISIL, for the operations of the military.

There were a couple of things in it that he didn't like. One the them was the transfer of terrorists out of Guantanamo Bay.

□ 1800

Now, I would just ask that you think about the fact that, since the first NDAA 50 years ago, it has only been vetoed four times. In each instance, there was an agreement effectively prior to the veto on how to resolve it.

But not this guy, not this guy. He holds a photo op. He holds a photo op so that he can show off while he vetoes the National Defense Authorization Act.

I just hope that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will join us as we work to override the President's veto in the House. I honestly believe that we will get the votes in the House to do that.

I hope that the Members of the Senate who voted for the National Defense Authorization Act will vote for it again when they have the opportunity to do so after we send the bill over there, after we have overridden the President's veto with this piece of legislation in the House.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to apologize. If the President won't do it, I want to do it. What happened today I think will long be looked upon as one of the worst moments of American leadership.

With that, Mrs. HARTZLER, I thank you again for what you have done for the men and women who serve and your service in this House.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I thank the gentleman.

I think it is so important to remember that national defense is not a partisan issue. It is a constitutional duty. It is a constitutional privilege that we have, as elected officials in this country, to provide for the common defense.

The bill did pass overwhelmingly with bipartisan support in the House, in the committee, and over in the Senate. I am hopeful as well that we will

be able to continue to join together to override this veto.

My friend from Georgia also made the comment and the sad news about the photo op that the President did today as he vetoed this piece of legislation.

I wonder, where is the photo op with the soldiers right now fighting in Afghanistan and some of them, sadly, who have died lately? Where is the recognition for them? Where is the photo op with the sorties that are being flown and our pilots that are going into harm's way to take on ISIS right now? Where is the photo op with all the military families that are sacrificing?

It is truly shameful, I think, that this occurred. I stand alongside with those who are fighting for the people of this country to keep them safe.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GIBSON), another friend who is a champion of this, who is a decorated Army commander, proudly serves on the Armed Services Committee and does a wonderful job.

Mr. GIBSON. Thank you. I really want to express my gratitude to the gentlewoman. I thank her for leading tonight, putting this together.

I also want to thank my colleagues that came out tonight to share their views and share their experiences.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very critical topic we are talking about here today. The first function of government is to protect its people.

Mr. Speaker, every single one of our service chiefs are on record, under oath in sworn testimony, saying that, if they do not get the additional resources that are provided in parts of this bill, that they will not be able to execute the national security strategy, that it will break our military.

Mr. Speaker, this is at a time that we have Russian tanks in Syria. We have got a significant challenge from the Islamic State. We have got major issues with Iran. We are dealing with a very aggressive Putin in Eastern Europe. We have got a quixotic leader in North Korea and an ambiguous situation in China.

Now is not the time to be taking a knee on our national security strategy. Now is not the time to be breaking our military.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure it is clear just how partisan the President's actions are. The American people need to know just how partisan this action is.

This process, our national security policy bill, is collaborative.

In our committee, in the House Armed Services Committee, we hold hearings. It is fully collaborative. Both sides—Republicans and Democrats—get to come together, work on the issues, bring forward the questions, collaborate in that whole process of the hearing.

Then we have a markup. We have a markup at the committee level. This markup lasts for, in some cases, over 12 hours. Every single person in that com-

mittee, regardless of party, is able to bring forward their ideas, to speak for their people, to offer their amendments, to have debate, and to have a vote on those amendments.

As the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT) mentioned, at the culmination of that process in the House Armed Services Committee, the vote in our committee was 60–2, a strong vote, a bipartisan vote. The representatives of the people of the United States voted to support our servicemen and women and their families.

The vote that was taken here on the floor of the House was a strong, bipartisan vote. Our colleagues over in the Senate, as was mentioned—the vote on the conference was 70–27. Three individuals who are running for President of the United States who were not present expressed support for it. Seventy-three votes, almost three-quarters of the United States Senate, represented the will of those respective States that they were here to represent. It was a strong, bipartisan vote.

We have a supermajority supporting this bill for our servicemen and women and their families.

The President of the United States, despite all that, vetoed this bill when it is so clear that every single one of our service chiefs have said that they need these additional resources or we will not be able to execute the national security strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this is also very personal for me. I enlisted at the age of 17 as a private in the Infantry back in 1981. In my early years in the military, I was part of an effort to try to increase the readiness of our Armed Forces, and I saw those efforts working. I saw us continuing to build capability throughout the eighties and standing on the principle of peace through strength.

We won the cold war without a major conflict. We put ourselves in the position, when we had conflict in 1990 in the Persian Gulf war, that we had a military with overmatch so that we were able to prevail in that conflict with as few casualties as was possible.

Mr. Speaker, over time, in the 29 years that I served in the military, the other important facet of peace through strength is it forged trust with those who were willing to come forward and defend this Nation, trust that their leaders here in Washington, D.C.—regardless of party—would always have their back, would ensure the resources necessary so that they could be fully equipped and trained, would be there for them, that their pay and benefits would always be there for them, and that, when they deployed forward, that the programs would be there to support their families.

Mr. Speaker, that trust was really called into question today by our President, who, in a very partisan manner, vetoed an overwhelmingly bipartisan piece of legislation. I can't even begin to tell you how disappointed I am.

Mr. Speaker, we will fight this. We are working now with our colleagues. We feel like we are in a strong position in the Senate to override this. We have more work to do here in the United States House. That work is ongoing. We need to enact this bill.

Let me just end where I began and thank the gentlewoman for her leadership. I thank her for coming forward today to organize this, to really inspire us to come together to express so that the American people can know what happened today and how their representatives, in a bipartisan way, will rise to this challenge and make sure that we get this important national security policy bill into law.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I thank the gentleman for his service and for sharing how important it is, how vital it is, that we override this veto and do what is right for our troops and for America.

The last speaker is the newly elected gentleman from California who I have really enjoyed getting to know and is a privilege to serve with on the Armed Services Committee.

I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. KNIGHT).

Mr. KNIGHT. I thank Congresswoman HARTZLER for her leadership in this role. This is of vital importance.

I want to start this discussion with just a little bit of reference. When I got elected 9 months ago, everyone said: You have to go to Congress. You have to get some things done. You have to work across the aisle. You have to build some friendships. You have to do these things.

I think in the one committee that I sit on, Armed Services, we do that. We talk about the military. We talk about what is best for it, what is best for America, what is best for the readiness, and what are the programs and the projects and the arms and the things that we are going to do to make sure that our men and women are the best prepared to go into battle, if called upon.

But today I think we saw a little bit of politics, and maybe we have seen that for the last week or more. But political football shouldn't happen around the military. We should be able to hammer these things out.

As you heard from some of the speakers before, this has been vetoed four times, and every time it has been basically an issue that has then been worked out. We have come back, we have taken care of that issue, and it has gone forward.

So for 53 years, the NDAA has worked like it is supposed to: put the military first, put America first, and move forward through the disagreements.

But as you have heard—and we heard this in the discussion with part of the NDAA—that this was going to be vetoed. The President was forecasting maybe he would veto this.

Well, this wasn't a secret operation we were doing. The NDAA was out in the open. I don't know of a chairman

that is better than the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services at working across the aisle, working with the issues, and trying to get everything done before we get to a problem like this, including working with the White House. That is exactly what happened.

But I would disagree with some of the speakers that came before me when they said that the President came out and he brought his pen and he did a photo op. This was forecasted that it was going to be done today, today.

Is there something that is happening today that is going to take up all the news, that is going to be in all of the papers tomorrow, that is going to be on Twitter? That is right. The Benghazi hearing is happening right now, and it has been happening for hours.

During this veto, the Benghazi hearing was happening. I just went on Twitter. There are 200 times more Twitter feeds on Benghazi than the NDAA veto.

In politics, we would call that cover. We would call that: You know what? I have to do something bad; so, I had better do it when they are not looking at me. That is exactly what happened today.

Let's talk about the NDAA a little bit. Yes, we have had some disagreements, and we have figured them out: 60-2 in the House. How do you get something done when you get such a bipartisan vote? Well, you sit there for 20 hours and you work through a chairman and you get the issues worked out.

\$612 billion was asked for. \$612 billion was given. A 1.3 percent pay raise from the President's budget, a 1.3 percent pay raise to our military, that was done.

In July, we lost four Marines to a tragic incident in Tennessee. When I went home, many people said: What are you going to do about this? Can you change something? Shouldn't they be armed? Shouldn't something happen?

That is in the NDAA. Now we give post commanders the appropriate ability to arm our recruiting and our reserve centers.

But let's go a little further. This allows our friends and enemies to know what is happening in America. Now, today they say: Is something happening in America that is weak? Because for 53 years, it has been the military first, America first. We are going to be strong. And today I have got to believe that our friends and enemies might be scratching their head and saying: What is happening in America?

That is not something we ever want. We want our friends to know that we are going to be shoulder to shoulder with them, and we want our enemies to know that we are as strong as we possibly can be.

I am going to finish thanking the gentlewoman from Missouri. We have a kindredship. In my district, we tested and built every B-2. In her district, she houses the B-2 Spirit that sends them off to do difficult deals, difficult sorties. I am very proud of what the B-2 does, just as I am proud of every man

and woman in the military and every mission that they complete.

□ 1815

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to stand with the military, then let's stand with the military. If we are going to turn our back and say that this is not what we believe, then that is not what I want to be part of. I think we should work as hard as we possibly can to override this veto. That is the mission. That is the vision.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, gentleman. I share that vision and look forward to working alongside you to do the right thing for the American people.

I think you brought up many good points, but certainly the situation now under this Commander in Chief is that we have a situation where our allies don't trust us and our enemies don't fear us. This action today can't help but contribute further to that thinking. We have got to reverse this. America is strong when it is safe, and it is safe because it is strong.

We have heard this evening, Mr. Speaker, from many people who are experts on this issue. Not only do they care about it passionately, but they themselves have put on the uniform and made the sacrifices. They have left families to serve their country, and they know what it is like, what our troops are facing and what potential dangers we can be in by jeopardizing their security by not providing for them and passing a National Defense Authorization Act. We have heard from other colleagues here who are parents and who have children who have answered the call and signed up to serve their country and gone into harm's way, some of them who are there right now.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard how distressing it is for our troops to hear today—no matter where they are, whether they are in Afghanistan, Iraq, whether they are in the Pacific or they are in the jungles of Africa, or whether they are advising as we look and see what is going on with Ukraine and the President, and whether they are monitoring intelligence around the world, cyber threats and cyber attacks—when they turn on their TV tonight, to find out that their Commander in Chief has vetoed the bill that would provide for the resources that they need to carry out their mission, to find out that it is not done because of some specific provisions in the bill, unlike a few times in the past 53 years where we have passed this, but because the President wants to advance a domestic agenda that has nothing to do with providing for our common defense. It is wrong and it is disheartening.

Just a reminder of the things in this bill, the reasons it is so important. It provides: \$612 billion for our national defense, the exact amount of money that the President requested; a pay raise for our hardworking troops; retirement benefits for those that don't

have it now; the authority of commanders, like Representative KNIGHT shared, to be able to make a policy to allow the soldiers on their installation to be able to defend themselves and carry guns so hopefully we won't see the senseless tragedy again; to restrict allowing Guantanamo Bay detainees—terrorists, basically—to be brought here to America and put into our jails in our backyard; and to support our allies, whether it be the Iron Dome for Israel that has been so helpful in saving countless thousands of lives in Israel in the last few years, but also to provide funding for those fighting for freedom in Ukraine, allowing them to protect themselves.

Other speakers talked about space protections, protections against sexual assault in the military, preventing the transfers, supports our allies, some of the things I have said, acquisition reform. We did everything we could in this bill to help make the Pentagon more efficient and more effective to save money, and we will continue to do that.

We also heard about the dangers and how, with the President's veto, it is going to eliminate critical training time, and parents are going to be able to question whether their child is going to be safe when they send them to war.

Mr. Speaker, we can't allow this veto to stand. If the Commander in Chief is going to forsake his most fundamental duties, then the people of the House, the representatives of the people of America, will and are going to do everything possible to override this veto and to make sure that those in harm's way have what they need, that we don't jeopardize our national defense, and that we continue to have our priorities right as a nation.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to come on the House floor tonight and to share about this very, very important issue and this very historic day, and to also lay the groundwork for November 5, when we will vote for an override of this veto. I ask all my colleagues to support that, and I look forward to a positive vote.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded not to engage in personalities toward the President.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 22, 2015.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on October 22, 2015 at 3:09 p.m.: