

Middle East and Africa is leading to conflicts over food and water, escalating longstanding regional and ethnic tensions into violent clashes. Rising sea levels are putting people and food supplies in vulnerable coastal regions at risk, threatening to displace countless people.

The increasing scarcity of resources in regions across the globe is stressing governments that are trying to provide basic needs for their citizens. In already volatile regions of the world, these are highly dangerous conditions that can enable terrorist activity and exacerbate refugee crises. As these threats around the world continue to multiply due to climate change, the U.S. is forced to extend our limited resources in humanitarian aid and military security to more locations in an effort to keep the peace, protect our interests and allies, and avoid major conflicts.

It is not just the wonky scientists and policymakers that are sounding the alarm. The Department of Defense declared that the threat of climate change will affect the Pentagon's ability to defend the Nation and poses immediate risk to U.S. national security. The CIA and the Department of State have already identified climate change as a national security challenge, yet Congress continues to refuse to act on this issue.

We are already experiencing the impacts of climate change from superstorms in the U.S. to devastating droughts in the Middle East. As climate change continues to strain economies and societies across the world, it will only create additional resource burdens and impact the way our military executes its missions, forcing our military to spend more on crisis prevention, humanitarian assistance, and government stabilization.

This is why we have to act now. It is time for my colleagues to realize that the debate is over and that now is the time to deal with the very real consequences of climate change. As President Obama said: "To make collective decisions on behalf of a common good, we have to use our heads. We have to agree that facts and evidence matter. And we got to hold our leaders and ourselves accountable . . ."

While we can't reverse climate change, we can work with our partners around the world to slow the process, assist in adaptation, and protect our national security interests. The health and security of future generations depends on our actions today.

WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE OF AMERICAN RESOURCES IN AFGHANISTAN NEEDS TO STOP

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

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I am again on the floor—I don't know how many times I have been on the floor—to talk

about the waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan. It just keeps going on and on.

Last week there was a great article—I don't think it was really great, but a very disturbing article—in *The Washington Post*, and the title was "Afghanistan Paid 11,000 Militants to Lay Down Their Arms. Now the Money Has Run Out." It was the American taxpayer who paid the militants to stop fighting and killing Americans.

Somewhere along the way this doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. We, the American taxpayers, have been paying fringe Taliban fighters not to fight for years. The article explained that there is little accountability of how that money is spent and where. We do not even know if paying fringe Taliban fighters not to fight is working. Further, committed Taliban fighters get money from other sources and still get money from the American taxpayer, and they are there to kill Americans. Somewhere along the way this just makes no sense at all.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD my letter to Speaker RYAN about the great work of John Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 14, 2016.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER, During the Easter District Work Period, I read an Associated Press article about your support for numerous spending cuts to the FY 2017 budget in order to secure additional votes. While I support such efforts, it remains difficult for me to comprehend why congressional leadership continues to support the waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan.

After over 14 years, and over \$800 billion dollars, the waste is more obvious today than ever before. I have enclosed two articles for your review that detail the severity of the situation. First is a USA Today story regarding Mr. John Sopko's testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee that details the mysterious case of "Schrödinger's goats," in which \$6 million was spent on nine male goats meant to start a cashmere industry in Afghanistan, and whose status as dead or alive cannot be confirmed. Second is an NBC story, "12 Ways Your Tax Dollars Were Squandered in Afghanistan" which, unfortunately, is only a small sample of the waste.

Surprisingly, many in the Republican Party question why the American public is so frustrated with our leadership. A cursory look at the multitude of reports of the wasted billions of dollars in Afghanistan should easily rationalize the American people's frustration. Adding Afghanistan spending to the chopping block will go a long way toward gaining the support of the American people and restoring fiscal sanity to Washington, DC. Nothing is changing in Afghanistan—it continues to be the graveyard of empires and with a growing debt surpassing \$19 trillion, I believe that America is heading for the graveyard.

Mr. Speaker, I also encourage you to personally meet with Mr. John Sopko, the Special Inspector General of Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). The valuable work of SIGAR has uncovered billions of dollars of waste, fraud, and abuse in Afghanistan, which we must stop.

Thank you for your continued leadership and consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

WALTER B. JONES,
Member of Congress.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, in the letter to Mr. RYAN, I ask him, the Speaker of the House, if he would find 45 minutes in the very busy schedule that he has to meet with John Sopko. I have been in meetings, both formal and informal, with John Sopko, and other Members of Congress have, and his group, known as SIGAR, have given full reports every year for the past few years to talk about the failure of our policy in Afghanistan. I don't know why we in Congress continue to fund Afghanistan. It is nothing but a waste of life and money, and it needs to stop.

Mr. Speaker, it is true now that we have fewer Americans killed in Afghanistan, but they still are being killed and wounded. I have a poster beside me that I have carried down to my district in North Carolina, as well as here in the House. For every one American that dies, I write a letter to the family. I have sent over 11,000 letters to families in this country. I started this when we had the war in Iraq, on which I failed to vote my conscience. I bought the misinformation from the Bush administration, and I voted to send our troops to Iraq.

This picture is of a little girl standing there with her hand holding her mother's hand, with her finger in her mouth kind of wondering why her daddy is in a flag-draped coffin. This will continue to go on. There will be families across this Nation until we pull out of Afghanistan. Let Afghanistan take care of its own problems. We cannot buy friendship in Afghanistan.

I close with this, Mr. Speaker. It was said many, many years ago about Afghanistan that Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires. With our \$19 trillion debt, there will soon be a headstone in Afghanistan that says: "USA." It is time to get out of Afghanistan.

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH AND SENIOR HUNGER

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the contributions of our seniors during Older Americans Month this month, I rise to draw attention to an issue that often goes overlooked in our communities, and that is the terrible problem of hunger among aging adults.

Food insecurity among seniors has doubled since 2001, and is expected to increase significantly as the baby boomer generation ages. Today, food insecurity impacts 5 million seniors across the country, forcing them to make impossible decisions between food, medical care, home heating, and other necessities.

We know that hunger is a health issue, and that is especially true among seniors over the age of 60. Research from Feeding America suggests that, compared to their food-secure neighbors, seniors suffering from hunger are 60 percent more likely to experience depression, 53 percent more likely to report a heart attack, 52 percent more likely to develop asthma, and 40 percent more likely to report an experience of congestive heart failure.

Baby boomers spend twice as much on health care as young adults do. Ensuring seniors have access to nutritious food is vitally important. We know that seniors have unique nutritional needs, and I am pleased to see scientists collaborating to create nutritional guidance for seniors.

Researchers at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, with support from the AARP Foundation, recently unveiled an updated MyPlate for Older Adults graphic to help seniors visualize what foods cover the nutritional needs that make up a healthy plate for adults their age. The new icon also encourages them to follow healthy eating patterns.

I was pleased to join scientists from Tufts as well as representatives of AARP last week at a briefing on Capitol Hill to unveil the new MyPlate icon and educate congressional staff on the importance of senior nutrition.

But if we want to ensure seniors have access to nutritious foods, we must also ensure that they have the ability to afford fruits, vegetables, and other healthy options. One critical step we can take toward the goal of ending senior hunger is closing what is referred to as the "senior SNAP gap."

While millions of our parents, grandparents, teachers, and friends are facing hunger, only a fraction of low-income seniors eligible for food assistance through SNAP are accessing the benefits, presumably because of the stigma associated with assistance, or because seniors are unaware they qualify for benefits.

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Many seniors also suffer from limited mobility or may have issues completing benefit applications, which can be complex and very time-consuming. In fact, seniors are more likely than any other age group to be eligible for SNAP, but they are not enrolled to receive the benefits.

That is why I am pleased to see so many advocacy organizations using Older Americans Month to call attention to the issue of senior hunger. Through their hashtag Solve Senior Hunger campaign, Feeding America and other antihunger and -aging organizations across the country are reaching out to seniors and their loved ones to raise awareness and ensure that those seniors who are eligible to receive SNAP benefits are connected to the appropriate resources.

We should do all we can to help solve senior hunger by talking to our family

members and friends about senior hunger and by partnering with leaders in our communities who work to improve access to nutritious food for senior populations.

During my years in Congress, I have had the opportunity to visit food banks and other organizations in my district that are working to end hunger among seniors. Last year I had the privilege of spending a day with a Meals on Wheels program that is based in Northampton, Massachusetts, which is part of my congressional district. I helped to prepare and deliver meals and had the opportunity to speak with seniors who were served through this incredible program.

Members of Congress have an important role in ensuring our Nation's seniors don't go hungry. I encourage all of my colleagues to spend time with similar programs in their districts.

Congress must adequately fund programs like Meals on Wheels, which provides nutritious food to seniors, and reject harmful cuts to SNAP, which will disproportionately harm the most vulnerable among us: children, seniors, and the disabled.

That hunger is still a big problem in America, the richest country in the history of the world, and it should make us all ashamed. But, in working together, we have the power to end hunger now, especially among our senior population. Let's act now.

VENEZUELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the ongoing crisis in Venezuela due to the incompetence of its leader, Nicolas Maduro. No matter what Maduro says, the crisis is his fault, not the fault of the U.S., not the fault of the Organization of American States. Maduro and his corrupt cronies are the ones to blame for this disaster—no one else.

While the Obama administration has sometimes tried to concede to the Maduro regime, it has only been reciprocated with no real positive change or any way forward by Maduro. Even now, the U.S. Embassy in Caracas has had to suspend appointments for Venezuelans who seek first-time tourist and business visas due to staff shortages that it blames on Maduro.

This is just the tip of the iceberg, Mr. Speaker. For a country that is rich in oil reserves, it is the sign of incompetence and corruption that Venezuela is struggling with empty grocery stores, shortages of medicine, high inflation, and a plummeting economy.

Now Maduro is trying desperately to receive assistance from other countries to save his corrupt regime. India has offered medicine in exchange for Venezuelan oil, and China may offer loans to Venezuela in exchange for oil. But these attempts are possibly too late,

and Venezuela may not be able to survive this incredible economic downward spiral.

To put it simply, Mr. Speaker, Venezuela is on the verge of total collapse, and what an impact that will have throughout our hemisphere. It is not a matter of if. It is a matter of when.

On top of that, Venezuela is also facing medical shortages that have become a humanitarian crisis. Recently, a group of Venezuelan legislative members were in D.C., meeting with us to ask for humanitarian assistance for their people and for medical supplies to take care of the sick in Venezuela.

Now, these members are the opposition of Nicolas Maduro, but they know that Maduro doesn't care about helping the people, so they are rising up to the chore.

The Venezuelan Medical Federation has asked the Maduro regime to accept humanitarian aid in order to handle the massive shortages of medicine in the country, a request that has not been agreed upon by Maduro. The Venezuelan Neurology Society reported that the shortage of medicines for neurological conditions has reached around 90 percent.

The Venezuelan National Assembly has declared a humanitarian health crisis that includes the lack of 872 essential medications. In April, the Venezuelan newspaper *El Nacional* reported that the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation declared that the shortage of medicines in pharmacies has reached 85 percent.

The lack of medicine, Mr. Speaker, impacts people from all walks of life, from the elderly, to the sick, to the mentally ill, to the children who cannot receive lifesaving care.

Individuals with serious illnesses have to go from pharmacy to pharmacy, looking for the medicines. If they don't find them, they either have to leave the country or try to smuggle the medicines in through the underground black market. The situation in Venezuela can also quickly become more violent and even more dangerous if the crisis is not resolved quickly.

Maduro has issued emergency decrees, even though the National Assembly rejected it, that will help him consolidate even more of his power. Power? Maduro doesn't care about the food and medicine for the people. All he cares about is having more power.

Last week Venezuela launched its biggest military exercise. Who is invading Venezuela? Why did he do it? To scare the population and to show the Venezuelan people his military might so as to prevent any protests by the people. At the same time, the Venezuelan National Assembly has called for its own country to be suspended from the Organization of American States.

The crisis in Venezuela must wake up others in the region. The new leaders of Argentina and Brazil are needed to bring the Southern Cone together in the name of regional stability.