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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LOUDERMILK).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 11, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BARRY LOUDERMILK to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2016, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF DOUG RICHARDSON

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

Mr. JOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a gentleman who has dedicated his life to serving our Nation, a true American hero from the State of Florida, Mr. Doug Richardson. Mr. Richardson is retiring from the United States Special Operations Command after 50 years of government service.

Mr. Richardson currently serves as a defense intelligence senior leader and as the program executive officer for

Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Exploitation at USSOCOM. A West Point graduate, Mr. Richardson distinguished himself throughout his military career, retiring as a colonel from Active Duty in the United States Army in 1993 and then continuing his service to USSOCOM as a civilian.

Perhaps the best example of Doug's integrity and courage is recorded in his Silver Star Medal citation, which was awarded to Doug for his heroism in combat during the Vietnam war. On June 18, 1969, while serving as an adviser with the 4th Cavalry Regiment of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, then-Captain Richardson accompanied a small armored infantry team moving to break through a very determined enemy force to rescue the crewmen of a downed United States Army helicopter. As the unit approached the village, it came under intense rocket-propelled grenade and automatic weapons fire from very well-concealed positions. The area was also known to be heavily mined and set with traps.

As the attempts of the Vietnamese to reach the helicopter were continually repulsed by enemy counterattacks, Captain Richardson dismounted his track, rallied a small force of Vietnamese soldiers, and then led them to the helicopter through enemy fire, exhorting his comrades to vigorously engage the enemy. Disregarding his personal safety and armed with only a pistol, Captain Richardson led his men through the mined area and into an assault on the enemy positions.

Following his example, the soldiers, though at a tactical disadvantage, pressed the attack vigorously and ultimately broke the resistance and secured the helicopter. Despite a hail of small-arms fire and hand grenades directed at his position, Doug continued his search for the survivors until he had found the remains of all U.S. crewmembers and then remained to extract the bodies of his fallen comrades from

the wreckage. As a result of Captain Richardson's valiant display of battle-field courage, the Vietnamese force was able to hold the area from a tenacious enemy and return the fallen soldiers to allied control.

Mr. Speaker, USSOCOM will miss Doug Richardson's leadership. As a Nation, let us recognize his valiant service. I ask that this body join me in honoring and congratulating Mr. Doug Richardson on a most honorable and truly heroic career.

FREE PUERTO RICO

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

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I come with a humble message from the Puerto Rican people to the House of Representatives: Free Puerto Rico.

Free Puerto Rico so that she can solve the problem of her crushing debt without being handcuffed by Congress. Free Puerto Rico so that her hospitals can stay open for sick moms and dads and her schools stay open for children. Nobody should fear that their house will burn down because the firemen have not been paid.

So far the response to Puerto Rico's debt crisis from Washington—the only place that Puerto Rico is forced to rely on—has been very little, and greedy bondholders and hedge fund managers only care about Puerto Rico as a wager, a way to make money whether Puerto Rico sinks or swims.

Right now, Puerto Rico needs serious, sustained attention from Washington to find a path forward such that Puerto Rico is neither absolved of her obligations nor mortally wounded by them. Mr. Speaker, here is what it comes down to: when the U.S. Supreme Court said that Puerto Rico belongs to but is not a part of the United States, the responsibility to care for her and her people came along with that judgment.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Congress must act responsibly for the fact that we expect Puerto Rico to pay its obligation, but we force her to play by a particular set of rules. Puerto Rico cannot declare bankruptcy because Congress passed a law saying that she could not. Puerto Rico is under the choke hold of the Jones Act, a law passed right here in this room, without any consultation with the Puerto Rican people, that says, by law, Puerto Rico cannot shop around for the best deal on shipping. No. They must buy the most expensive, which means double the import costs and an estimated \$500 million extra on Puerto Rico's food bill alone.

When it comes to producing for themselves, a large chunk of the best agricultural land—the land that sustains and feeds a nation—is taken away from them for U.S. military bases. Thirteen percent of the land is gone.

Puerto Rico is a tropical island, but a lot of its fruit and vegetables and almost all of its food is imported. We must allow Puerto Rico to create an agricultural economy, allowing Puerto Ricans to feed themselves. The economy produces goods the people do not consume, and the people consume goods that they do not produce.

Even when the U.S. is caught red-handed stealing water from Puerto Rico's freshwater supply—not paying a dime for it—what happens? The U.S. Government is not held responsible or made to pay. When the military bombs and pollutes Vieques and Culebra, does the U.S. Government feel any obligation to restore it? Not really.

So, Mr. Speaker, when Congress talks about Puerto Rico's debt, I say we look at the totality of the debt—the part owed to Puerto Rico, not just the part Puerto Rico owes to Wall Street. Every soldier she has sent to war, every time the U.S. has stepped in to override her courts and her government, these debts add up but are not accounted for.

Now, what is the solution that everyone in Washington is lining up behind? A Federal control board. Imagine that. An island that cannot determine its own destiny. It has to play an economic game with a stacked deck and all the rules rigged against her. What is the solution in Washington? Take away what little autonomy they have left.

If Congress were smart, we would find a way to get out of the way. Free Puerto Rico's people to unleash their inherent, hardworking character, spirit, and dedication. Free Puerto Ricans to work and toil and build and create. Free Puerto Rico so that she can build a sustainable economy that keeps her people at home in the land of their birth and their heritage.

We cannot get sidetracked by seeing Puerto Rico's economic health exclusively through the lens of food stamps, Medicaid, government programs, and further dependency on Washington. We must make the conversation about jobs for Puerto Ricans, jobs that build the economy, the tax base, and the self-sufficiency of the island.

Mr. Speaker, Puerto Rico's problems were a long time in the making, but I have utter confidence in Puerto Ricans' ability to solve them if we in the Congress begin to listen to them, work with them, and recognize them as equal partners.

We must free Puerto Rico so that the Puerto Rican people can free themselves.

KURDISH PESHMERGA

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the important efforts made by the Kurds and the Peshmerga in the fight against ISIS.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said last December: "The Kurdish Peshmerga have been exactly what we have been looking for in this whole fight in Iraq and Syria, namely a capable and motivated force that we can enable."

As you know, Mr. Speaker, we need to do more to combat ISIS on the ground and also to help our allies who are willing to join us in this effort. ISIS is a brutal evil, and it is one of the greatest threats to both our national security and to the security of our allies in the region.

We continue to read reports of ISIS raping women, beheading captives, and brutally torturing their prisoners; and ISIS' alleged use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in Iraq and Syria reaffirms the danger posed by this terrorist group. During the conflict against ISIS, the Kurds tell me that at least 1,600 Peshmerga forces have died and thousands more have been wounded, and we see some of these pictures here on this graphic.

We are thankful to all of the members of the Peshmerga who are fighting to eradicate the evil of ISIS, including several all-women units who are proud to fight for their people's freedom. These are the hardships that they all endure.

Unfortunately, the Peshmerga still don't have the proper weapons, the proper equipment—most of which is over 30 years old—and they are still running low on ammunition. In fact, the Peshmerga are using captured ISIS tanks to roll through minefields, while ISIS is using American equipment that they have picked up after overturning Mosul.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the legislation introduced by the chairman and ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which would authorize the direct provision of weapons to the Peshmerga, a bill which our committee passed unanimously in December.

The Peshmerga have already proven to be one of the most capable forces on the battlefield, and making sure that they are strong, making sure that they are well-equipped is crucial to defeat-

ing the ISIS threat that confronts us all. The Peshmerga are continuing to fight despite not being paid for months, with uncertain logistical backup, and with inadequate weapons and equipment—three strikes against them.

The Peshmerga need our help, and we must get them what they need in order to have them continue to be successful. The Peshmerga provides safe havens for Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, and people of any religious minority who have been oppressed. According to the Kurds, about 300,000 Syrian refugees and 1.5 million internally displaced persons are in the Kurdistan region, where there is a growing humanitarian crisis.

I will turn to the other poster that I have, Mr. Speaker, their fighting forces.

The burden of war and the responsibility of caring for 1.8 million additional people have pushed the Kurdistan region's economy to the brink of collapse. My friend, Igor Pasternak, recently briefed me on his visit to the Black Tiger Peshmerga base south of Mosul on the ISIS front line, and he introduced me to the Kurdistan Regional Government's representative to the U.S., Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman.

Ms. Rahman's parents were sentenced to death by Saddam Hussein because they refused to bow down to his tyranny, and instead they fought for Kurdish liberation and for human rights. Her parents lived to see Saddam's downfall, and her father continued his leadership role in the Kurdish region's struggle before being tragically assassinated by Islamic extremists in 2004.

In the Iraq city of Erbil, Sami Abdul Rahman Park honors Ms. Rahman's father and, more importantly, recognizes the immense oppression suffered by the Kurdish people.

I am pleased that KRG Representative Rahman is in the gallery today.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to announce that I will soon be introducing a resolution to honor the brave men and women of the Peshmerga and their families who are fighting bravely against the brutal evil of ISIS and to stand with the Kurdish people as they continue to endure great hardships during this war.

God bless each and every one of them.

□ 1015

VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, since 1970, more Americans have been killed from domestic gun violence than all the Americans killed in every war going back to the American Revolution.

If all the victims of gun violence since 1970 were put on a wall like the Vietnam Memorial, it would contain