

programs and secure a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. By working together as allies and friends we increase the likelihood of making these aspirations into reality.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOST). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1149.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REAFFIRMING THE STRONG COMMITMENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO THE COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1157) reaffirming the strong commitment of the United States to the countries and territories of the Pacific Islands region.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1157

Whereas the Pacific Islands countries and territories are home to more than 10 million culturally diverse people and are rooted in a unique culture and history spanning thousands of years;

Whereas the South Pacific region, of which the Pacific Islands countries and territories are an integral part, is endowed with a resource-rich ocean stretching over 20 million square miles;

Whereas the United States partnership with the countries of the Pacific Islands region dates back to the battles of World War II on the shores of Tarawa, Pelelieu, and Guadalcanal, where Pacific Islanders and Americans alike sacrificed for our collective security;

Whereas the United States territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are located in the South Pacific region and some of these relationships date back to the Spanish-American War;

Whereas the United States is committed to the future security and prosperity of the Pacific Islands countries and territories and is responsible for security and defense matters in and relating to Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands under their respective Compacts of Free Association;

Whereas the Compacts of Free Association arrangements with the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands were renewed in 2003 for a period of 20 years and negotiations regarding the subsequent renewal of these agreements should be concluded in advance of their expiration in 2023;

Whereas the South Pacific region is critical to United States national security and defense, and there are several United States military bases and testing sites in the region, including the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site on the Marshall Islands;

Whereas the United States cooperates closely with Pacific Islands countries and

territories as a partner committed to a common future that advances national security, regional cooperation, and trust and collaborating on a wide range of important issues such as addressing environmental and public health threats, distributing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and promoting peace and prosperity in the region;

Whereas in the Boe Declaration of 2018, leaders of Pacific Islands countries and territories reaffirmed that the threat of climate change imperils the livelihoods, security, and well-being of the peoples of such countries and territories;

Whereas a major priority of Pacific Islands countries and territories is addressing environmental and sustainability challenges, including responding to national disasters, and implementing environmental programs to address mitigating their unique vulnerabilities to the effects of rising sea levels, combatting ocean acidification, and protecting natural resources, and extreme weather events remains a priority for and point of collaboration between the United States and Pacific Islands countries;

Whereas the United States works closely with Australia and New Zealand and other like-minded partners in the South Pacific region, and there is opportunity for enhancing such cooperation as all three countries look for opportunities to increase their focus on this important region;

Whereas China's increased influence in the South Pacific region and the possibility of a future Chinese military presence in this region could expand its monitoring and surveillance capabilities, threatening the United States military presence in the region;

Whereas media reports revealed that Chinese scientists placed acoustic sensors in the Mariana Trench near Guam and near the island of Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia, which could be used to monitor United States submarine activity in the region;

Whereas planned casino resort developments by Chinese investors on the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands could complicate Department of Defense plans on the islands for extensive training and exercises resulting from the relocation of Marines from Okinawa, Japan;

Whereas a bilateral agreement between the United States and Japan will relocate approximately 4,100 United States Marines from Okinawa, Japan to Guam, significantly bolstering United States national security in the region;

Whereas official Chinese Government statements and policy documents indicate that the Pacific Islands are a component of the Belt and Road Initiative, which according to the Department of Defense aims "to develop strong economic ties with other countries, shape their interests to align with China's, and deter confrontation or criticism of China's approach to sensitive issues";

Whereas the Lowy Institute found that China has pledged \$5.88 billion worth of aid to the region since 2011, yet despite these large commitments, China has only spent \$1.26 billion so far and concerns remain over the types of loans extended and whether the commitments will be kept;

Whereas recent debt sustainability analysis by the World Bank shows that nine Pacific Islands countries and territories are currently classified as either at high or moderate risk of debt distress;

Whereas China continues to shrink the number of Taiwan's international partners around the globe by inducing countries to switch recognition through financial incentives and six of Taiwan's remaining diplomatic allies in the Pacific Islands region advocate on Taiwan's behalf at the United Nations and other international fora;

Whereas the United States plays an active role in regional fisheries management through its involvement in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and in maintaining programs to help Pacific Island countries combat illegal fishing, including bilateral "shiprider" agreements that allow law enforcement officers of host partner countries onboard United States Coast Guard ships and aircraft to patrol national exclusive economic zones;

Whereas the United States, through more than 17 departments and agencies, committed more than \$350 million in fiscal year 2017 to engagement with Pacific Islands countries;

Whereas the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 authorized and appropriated \$123.8 million in funding through 2024 for the 2010 Palau Compact Review Agreement;

Whereas every two years, the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet hosts the world's largest international maritime exercise, known as the "Rim of the Pacific", for which this past year Tongan Marines traveled to Hawaii with Australia's Navy to participate and Fiji has been invited to join the exercise in 2020; and

Whereas in September 2018 at the 30th Pacific Islands Forum in Nauru, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke stated the United States "see[s] all of the Pacific Islands as an essential part of our free and open Indo-Pacific policy"; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) reaffirms its strong commitment to United States engagement with all countries and territories of the South Pacific region, including the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, the Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu;

(2) reaffirms its strong support to the United States Pacific Island territories of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa, home to nearly 300,000 United States citizens;

(3) supports continued efforts to deepen cooperation with countries and territories of the Pacific Islands in areas of mutual interest, such as addressing the negative impacts of climate change, promoting sustainable economic development, and supporting regional organizations and stability;

(4) calls for the United States to increase the frequency of high-level bilateral and multilateral visits with leaders of Pacific Islands;

(5) promotes and supports efforts by Australia, New Zealand, France, and other like-minded partners to strengthen Pacific Islands countries' sovereignty and development through economic and security assistance; and

(6) encourages continued support for the Compacts of Free Association which enhance the strategic posture of the United States in the Western Pacific, reinforce United States regional commitment, preempt potential adversaries from establishing positional advantage, and further self-governance, economic development, and self-sufficiency of the Freely Associated States.

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 of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material in the record.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize Representative BORDALLO for introducing this measure on an important but often overlooked part of the world, and that is the South Pacific.

Mr. Speaker, the Pacific Islands are an essential part of the South Pacific region. Today we express our commitment to these countries' and territories' security and to their prosperity.

Our country has a long history with the Pacific Islands and territories. Today we have 300,000 United States citizens that reside in the territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and in American Samoa.

The U.S. is engaged in this important region through a variety of programs which promote national security and also regional cooperation. They address conservation and public health threats. They distribute humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and they promote peace and prosperity.

The United States has supported these endeavors under the Compacts of Free Association with Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. These important arrangements have allowed the U.S. to project a presence in the region for 30 years, but these compacts expire in 2023.

The United States must continue to reassure the Pacific Island countries of our enduring commitment to having a continuing presence in the region and negotiate compact renewals before they expire.

Our relationship with this region is unfolding against the backdrop of a shifting strategic environment where Beijing and others seek to wield a greater influence in the South Pacific.

For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this measure which reaffirms the importance of continuing to engage and cooperate with the Pacific Island countries and territories.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this measure.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the gentlewoman from Guam (Ms. BORDALLO), my colleague, for her long-standing advocacy of American engagement in the Pacific region. I thank her for introducing this resolution.

This measure supports cooperation with the Pacific Islands in the areas

where we both have critical interests, including support for regional organizations and promotion of sustainable economic development.

The resolution rightly focuses on a critical threat facing the Pacific Islands and the United States, which is climate change.

In September of this year, Pacific Island leaders reaffirmed in a joint declaration that "climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security, and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific."

I wish that the President and the administration would act on that threat, but, instead, the United States refuses to acknowledge climate change at recent international conferences. The refusal to acknowledge established scientific fact is really wrong and dangerous.

Our country has a critical role to play in the effort to address climate change, and when we abdicate that responsibility, we endanger future generations and the regions most at risk, like the Pacific Islands.

So this is a good resolution, affirming America's commitment to advance self-government, economic development, and self-sufficiency for all the people of this strategically important region.

It is important to note that this resolution expresses our continued support for our compact agreements with the Freely Associated States. The Pacific Islands remain a region critical to our interests and the interests of our partners, including Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. It makes sense that we would continue to support investments that enhance our partnership with the Pacific Islands.

I support this measure, and I urge all Members to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN).

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, as ranking member of the Asia and the Pacific Subcommittee, I rise to support H. Res. 1157, which reaffirms the strong commitment of the United States to the countries and territories of the Pacific Islands region. I want to applaud Representative BORDALLO for introducing this, and I am proud to join with others as a cosponsor.

First, this resolution sends an important message to the 300,000 Americans who call the region home. Our fellow Americans in Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa, for them, this measure recognizes that they are a critical part of our Nation's fabric.

Indeed, when North Korea threatened to launch missiles at a U.S. territory, it said that it would hit Guam. We cannot forget about these Pacific territories and, in Congress, we have an ob-

ligation to make sure that their voices are heard in these Halls.

This resolution also specifically encourages continued support for the Compacts of Free Association which we currently have with the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau. Currently, the United States provides, under these compacts, essential governmental functions, including defense.

While our compact with Palau was recently renewed, the Compacts of Free Association with the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands will expire in 2023. We in Congress should not wait. We should ensure that the compacts are expeditiously renewed. These arrangements not only help encourage the development of Palau, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands, but also serve our core national security interests.

I know firsthand that we cannot take our Pacific partnerships for granted—not just in the compact states, but across the region, because other states around the region are facing entreaties from the Chinese Government.

The Chinese Government states that the Pacific Islands are a core component of their One Belt, One Road initiative, which seeks to ensnare small nations into Beijing's debt traps.

We know that China is stepping up its military involvement in the region, recently placing acoustic sensors in the Mariana Trench to track American submarine movements.

As the resolution recognizes, the solution to this challenge is for the U.S. to strengthen its engagement. We must "increase the frequency of high-level bilateral and multilateral visits with leaders of Pacific Islands" and find issues to work on in common.

For example, many of the Pacific Island nations face an existential threat from rising sea levels. Accordingly, this resolution calls for us to work with these countries to address the negative impacts of climate change. Many of the territories or islands of these countries actually face submergence as a result of rising sea levels. In doing so, we would work with our partners around the world.

While China employs bully tactics to unilaterally assert itself in the Pacific, the United States sets an example by working closely with the island nations and with Australia and New Zealand to promote sustainable development across the region.

I want to thank Representative BORDALLO again for her leadership on this issue. This resolution is an overdue affirmation of our commitment to the prosperity of the American territories in the Pacific and to the strengthening of the relationships between the United States and the nations of the region.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

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

I want to again thank Congresswoman BORDALLO for introducing this resolution.

American engagement in the Pacific Islands region is critical to our strategic posture in the Western Pacific. With its passage, we reaffirm our commitment to the islands. I support this resolution, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, with the shifting strategic environment of the South Pacific, it is really more important than ever that we engage Pacific Island nations and the Pacific Islands Forum to solve regional problems and to promote prosperity.

We must maintain support for the Compacts of Free Association which enhance the strategic posture of the U.S. and the Western Pacific, which also reinforce our regional commitment and preempt potential adversaries from establishing positional advantage there.

This resolution signals our resolve to maintain and deepen our collaboration with our friends and allies in the Pacific Islands and territories. I, therefore, urge my colleagues to join me in support of this resolution.

Mr. 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 agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1157.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONDEMNING THE ASSAD REGIME AND ITS BACKERS FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF WAR CRIMES AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY IN SYRIA

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1165) condemning the Assad regime and its backers for their continued support of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1165

Whereas Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, with the support of Iran and the Russian Federation, has committed widespread atrocities against the people of Syria, leading to one of the worst humanitarian crises in over 70 years, including the deaths of more than 500,000 people, the destruction of more than 50 percent of Syria's critical infrastructure, and the forced displacement of more than 14 million people;

Whereas the Assad regime, with the support of Iran and the Russian Federation, has conducted violent attacks against humanitarian aid workers, supplies, facilities, transports, and assets, and impeded the access and secure movement of humanitarian personnel, and has used chemical weapons against the Syrian people on numerous occasions;

Whereas since the introduction of Russian forces into Syria in September 2015, Russia has deployed over 68,000 Russian personnel to help sustain the Assad regime, and has reportedly transferred the S-300 surface-to-air missile system to Syria, giving Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and other Iranian-backed militias additional cover for their activities in Syria;

Whereas Iran is estimated to have deployed over 3,000 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and regular Iranian military advisers to Syria and approximately 20,000 militia fighters, including 'Asaib ahl al-Haq, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Fatimeyoun, and Zainabiyoun, which continue to expand their presence in Syria;

Whereas Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats has stated "it's unlikely Russia has the will or capability to fully implement and counter Iranian decision and influence" in Syria;

Whereas Iran's positions in Syria, which Iran has used to launch rockets and drones toward Israel, are critical to Iran's efforts to create a "land bridge" from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon so that it can arm Hezbollah in Lebanon with rockets and missiles, and increase the accuracy of Hezbollah's munitions;

Whereas Iranian-backed militias have demolished civilian areas, implemented sieges, and evicted civilian residents throughout Syria in a campaign of forced displacement, where Iranian-funded reconstruction plans to sell housing developments to foreign militias risk establishing a permanent Iranian presence and obstacle for return of thousands of Syrian families who fled Syria; and

Whereas the Syrian Government has reportedly signed agreements with Iran and IRGC controlled companies with respect to military cooperation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports a political solution to the conflict which will result in the air space of Syria no longer being utilized by the Assad regime or Russia to target civilians, an end to the sieges carried out by Assad, Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and other Iranian-backed militias, and the release of all political prisoners;

(2) opposes international reconstruction funds from supporting projects in Syria in areas controlled by the Assad regime as long as the Assad regime remains in power;

(3) condemns the Assad regime, the Government of the Russian Federation, the Government of Iran, and Hezbollah and other Iranian-backed militias for their continued support of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria, including the widespread use of torture, summary executions, prolonged sieges, forced relocations, and indiscriminate targeting of civilians and humanitarian actors;

(4) recognizes that as long as the Assad regime remains in power, it will continue to oppress the Syrian people, the Russian Federation will continue to expand its influence in the Middle East, and Iran will remain entrenched in Syria;

(5) calls upon the President and Secretary of State to work towards a sustainable political transition in Syria that results in a government in Syria that is not a danger to its own people, abandons its chemical weapons program, allows for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of displaced persons, and

does not provide Iran with a platform to threaten Syria's neighbors;

(6) urges the President and the Secretary of State develop a strategy to prevent a permanent Iranian presence in Syria, understanding that the Russia Federation has not proven to be a viable partner to help in this effort;

(7) urges the Secretary of State to investigate and determine whether the forced displacement of Syrian civilians from their homes through brutal sieges, starvation, and indiscriminate targeting of civilians, and repopulation with foreign fighters constitutes sectarian or ethnic cleansing; and

(8) calls on the President and Secretary of State to determine whether militias operating in Syria under the command of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Fatemiyoun, Zainabioun, and 'Asaib ahl al-Haq are terrorist organizations and meet the criteria for sanctions pursuant to Executive Order 13460 or 13582.

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 of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this measure.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, this resolution represents a broad bipartisan agreement that there will be no peace in Syria as long as the Assad regime remains in power and as long as Russia and Iran continue their entrenchment in that country.

For 7 years, the world has watched the brutal dictator, Bashar al-Assad, inflict untold suffering on the Syrian people. Since the beginning of the conflict, half a million people have been killed and 13 million, largely women and children, remain in dire need of basic humanitarian assistance in Syria.

The brutal Assad regime continues its onslaught on the civilian population in Syria, aided by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on the ground and the Russian Air Force in the sky.

Rather than working to eject Iran from Syria, Russia has been directly coordinating with Hezbollah, with the IRGC, and with other Iranian-backed militias that have expanded significantly throughout Syria.

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Russia has even now reportedly transferred the S-300 surface-to-air missile system to Syria, giving these militias additional cover for their activities in Syria.

Despite signing a deescalation agreement with President Trump last year