

Even with just a few years on the job, he went out into some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the city of New York and did real police work. He was willing to stop those cars to take those illegal guns off the street, even when he knew that district attorneys wouldn't do their best to prosecute. He went out there and did God's work. He did the work that he took the oath and swore that he would do.

Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my colleagues for sharing this hour not only with me, but with the family of Detective Diller, with members of law enforcement throughout this country, and with the NYPD. Every night I pray for the mayor of the city of New York, Mayor Adams; our police commissioner, Ed Caban; the hierarchy of the NYPD; and the rank and file, the men and women who go out there each and every day to do that great work.

You see, the men and women that we have honored tonight, it is not how they died that make them heroes, it is how they lived.

I thank all law enforcement officers throughout this country, whether it is right here in this beautiful Capitol building and the Capitol Police that protect us each and every day, to the counties, the cities, the villages, the States, from sea to shining sea. Stay safe. And realize that in a country where each and every night we watch the news and it seems like in our social media streams that all elected officials are fighting against the good work of law enforcement, there are good people that are praying for them, that are rooting for them, that are making sure that they have the resources each and every day to do the job that they need to do.

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

CRISIS IN HAITI

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order hour.

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

There was no objection.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to co-anchor the CBC Special Order hour, along with my distinguished colleagues, Representative JONATHAN JACKSON and STACEY PLASKETT.

For the next 60 minutes, Members of the CBC have an opportunity to discuss the crisis of Haiti, an issue of great importance to the Congressional Black

Caucus, Congress, the constituents we represent, and all of America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. CLARKE).

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise on this day to help shed light on an escalating crisis 700 miles from the shores of Florida. That crisis is in the island nation of Haiti.

I thank my colleagues for anchoring this evening's Special Order hour as part of our mission in the Congressional Black Caucus: Congresswoman SHEILA CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, and Congressman JONATHAN JACKSON, your leadership is tremendous, and, of course, my colleague, Congresswoman STACEY PLASKETT of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the Haitian people are experiencing some of the most horrific times in modern-day civil society. Their democracy has been suspended and there is no viable governance. Anarchy is poised to take root, and there is no protection for the people.

This is a humanitarian crisis that has reached unprecedented levels with widespread food insecurity, hunger, and undeterred gang violence, filling the void and terrorizing the nation.

□ 2030

According to the U.N., 4 million people in Haiti face acute food insecurity and 1 million are one step away from famine. Imagine the population of Los Angeles, subject to severe food insecurity and violence that has led to a spike in starvation, with goods unable to move freely while people are forced to remain in their homes out of fear for their lives.

Haiti is a mere 700 miles from our shores, yet in many ways, Haiti has been forgotten. It is urgent, crucial, that we pay attention.

American lore and ethos paint the United States as a Nation of immigrants, but our Nation has historically welcomed mostly immigrants of European origin, like Donald Trump, who once asked: Why are we having all these people from "S-hole" countries come here?

Some of the wealthiest people in the world, who despite being immigrants themselves, continue to push insane conspiracies, completely devoid of compassion, logic, and reason. They repeatedly use the rhetoric of the white supremacist great replacement conspiracy theory, focus efforts on the erasure of Black immigrants' contributions to our Nation from our history, and hoping that a whitewashed or real replacement theory of disinformation will endure.

Their racial cruelty and inhumanity have only enabled maltreatment of Black immigrants as temporary workers or, worse, as criminals, rather than as legal, permanent residents and asylum-seekers, as political pawns rather than people in need.

They describe Haitians as invaders. Desperate families seeking refuge,

clinging to life and their fleeting tenuous futures are not invaders. Such rhetoric reflects an ongoing 21st century vicious quest for racial hierarchy in immigration policy that deters and blocks Black refugees and immigrants from entering the United States.

It is urgent that we pay attention, because the Black African descendant diaspora has always been the reservoir to Black communities and Black families in the United States, from Malcolm X, whose mother was from the island nation of Grenada, to Vice President KAMALA HARRIS, whose father is Jamaican, just like mine.

As we continue to bear witness to the hell unfolding on a small nation a mere 700 miles off our coast, we can never forget that Black history is American history.

In closing, I implore my colleagues and the administration to come together for our Haitian sisters and brothers. My co-chairs from the Haiti Caucus and I will continue to push this administration to extend TPS for Haiti and a pause in deportations.

The whole country is unstable and dangerous. There is no excuse to send anyone anywhere in Haiti. Let me repeat: There is no excuse to send anyone anywhere in Haiti. We cannot give credence to those who would have us give in to fear, forsaking our American values for reasons beyond logic and comprehension. We cannot forsake our American values for reasons beyond comprehension or give credence to those who would have us give in to fear.

Our Nation rises to its greatest heights when we are guided by our hearts and compassion and moral obligations to our neighbors in need.

I, again, thank my colleagues for spending this time tonight.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE for her statements.

I also recognize that Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE has submitted her comments for the RECORD.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT).

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman SHEILA CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, as well as her co-chair, Congressman JONATHAN JACKSON, who have led this Special Order hour for some time now, bringing to America, as well as to other Members of Congress, the issues that are important to the Congressional Black Caucus, the conscience of the Congress.

It is these Special Order hours which really allow our colleagues and others to understand those issues which may not get the kind of attention through the media or even in our hearings that they deserve. I thank them for spending this time to allow us to talk about a festering crisis that is directly at our border, that Congress has not engaged in sufficiently to ensure that democracy continues to reign in this near neighbor of ours.

The time for dawdling, procrastination, pointless disputes, reviews, and continual talking has long expired. Haiti cannot wait.

Haiti is a nation that has endured a tremendous amount of misfortune. Although it holds the distinction of being the first republic of people of African descent and one of the oldest nations in the Americas, second only to the United States of America, Haiti faces a significant and ongoing humanitarian and political crisis.

The world has witnessed the Republic of Haiti face a profound political, security, and humanitarian crisis as the nation continues to be overwhelmed now by gangs that systematically endanger its democratic process. During this period, the U.S. has condemned the violence, imposed sanctions on gang leaders, and called to hasten the transition to elections.

That is not enough. While observing Haiti's plight—the sustained, consistent misfortune, lack of access to resources, abject poverty, and rampant corruption—one might wonder: What is the root cause of these issues? I know I have. I know others have. They have said: Why are they in this situation?

In understanding Haiti's disadvantaged state, we must acknowledge the ways in which the nation and its resources have, in fact, been exploited for many years.

In the early 1800s, Haiti was forced to pay huge reparations to France in exchange for independence, which they had won fairly. They have paid to the tune of \$21 billion to France, a debt that took over a century to pay off, payment for freedom.

Can we as Americans imagine paying England for the right to be independent, for winning a revolution?

But France required it, and we, the United States, forced that payment on Haiti, a debt that took over a century to pay, paid to a European superpower that had colonized and enslaved them in order to profit from their labor and the resources of the land. Like many European nations, the wealth and ease of living enjoyed by the French today were built at the expense of Haiti, the Haitian people, and many other colonized areas, affecting many generations.

The continuous and often gross exploitation that organically accompanied colonial rule in places like Haiti, along with the results that followed, is something that is often ignored. We want to forget that that happened. We want to just look at the state that they are in now and not think about what brought them there, how we may have led to that exploitation as well. It is rarely acknowledged and almost never remediated. The nation of Haiti, with its past, current, and ongoing dilemmas, is a testament to the tragedy of this reality.

How could a nation, entrenched in billions of dollars of debt over multiple generations, even begin to establish the necessary infrastructure and soci-

etal structure needed to build a semblance of normalcy and make significant progress towards economic growth and prosperity?

The severity of the situation has far surpassed the usefulness of words.

We, in the United States, must assist. We are operating on borrowed time, with Russia having already set its sights on expanding its reach from the African Continent closer to our shores. Intent on capitalizing on Haiti's political instability, the Wagner Group has sought to offer the Haitian Government military strength to combat the gangs. If the United States does not take immediate action, our foreign adversaries, not limited to Russia and China, may be 700 miles from our shores. That is how close Haiti is, as you have heard from Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE, to the United States.

This continued marginalization has negatively impacted the entire region—in this case, Haiti—and threatened to derail U.S. security and economic interests in the Western Hemisphere. The fiscal year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act included an amendment that directed the Department of Defense to assess the standing U.S. military force posture in the Caribbean, given U.S. national and regional security interests, and to thwart our foreign adversaries, Russia and China.

Those adversaries have set their sights on expanding their reach in the region of the Caribbean and Latin America. The continued expansion of Russian and Chinese influence threatens our national security, our prosperity, and our democratic values.

China's economic investments and financial assistance target vulnerable countries in the Caribbean and carry collateral conditions, including diplomatic expectations.

Through their Belt and Road Initiative, BRI, China has entrenched its presence by signing agreements with countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and others. These investments span vast infrastructure projects including the development of major ports, highways, and energy sectors.

For example, recently, the Dominican Republic received a \$600 million loan to expand the country's electric grid, along with a \$3.1 billion package of investments. Do we not think that China will not use this as leverage while these projects bolster economic growth and infrastructure development? They also raise concerns about the leverage and strategic advantages the investments have.

What will happen to Haiti?

Haiti is in a position where they need financial support. We in the United States have got to pass the Caribbean Trade Resolution. The resolution recognizes the importance of enhanced trade and investment in the Caribbean. We are also working on strengthening

existing trade relationships, like the Caribbean Basin Initiative or the sponsorship of HOPE for Haitian Prosperity Act of 2023, to signal our long-term commitment to Haiti.

As a member of the New Democratic Coalition, I join my colleagues in calling for renewal and enhancement of the Generalized System of Preferences, in which numerous Caribbean nations participate. In strengthening our economic partnership, the support of these nations is vital not only to their economic growth but to our national security.

As the United States' third border, the Caribbean's economic stagnation directly impacts U.S. security and stability.

As co-chair of the Congressional Caribbean Caucus, I am acutely aware that the economic and political challenges facing our neighbors are complex and as such require collaborative and sustained efforts from policymakers, industry experts, financial institutions, and civil society.

□ 2045

We must have U.S. leadership in the region. Neighboring nations will continue to look elsewhere for support.

Venezuela is another country that they are looking to. My colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus agree that Haiti is at an inflection point and that we need to act decisively by approving the State Department's request for \$40 million in funding for the Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti.

For over 6 months, this Congress has held those funds. Congressional Republicans have refused to deliver the necessary resources to carry out this mission, even as the situation on the ground has deteriorated.

The instability in Haiti is not only a humanitarian crisis but a threat to our national security. We believe that the Multinational Security Support Mission would advance the national security interests not just of Haiti but of the United States. It would demonstrate American leadership in the Caribbean and provide a lifeline to the Haitian people.

Depending in large part on what Congress does or does not do next, the situation could start to improve or, by contrast, devolve into chaos and even civil war. If we act decisively, then Haiti has a fighting chance. If we dither and delay, then we are likely to watch as the Haitian National Police collapses, violent gangs overrun the country, and irregular immigration to the United States and other countries surges.

We recognize that, of course, there is a right and responsibility to be careful to scrutinize the funds to ensure the State Department has explained, but we believe that the burden of persuasion has been met and that it is time to release the remaining funds.

We regard American leadership as indispensable in this area. What is happening in Haiti is a test of American

mettle, and we must pass this test. Our hands-off and apathetic approach to Haiti is an affront to our values. This is a country that helped us during our Revolutionary War. Haitian men came and fought alongside our American soldiers in the American Revolution. When they sought their own revolution, what did we do at the end but require them to pay our ally France?

Our support of Haiti must be clear. We must support our democratic neighbor to the south.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support all measures that would advance stability in this nation and ensure that the people of Haiti can, in fact, prosper.

I thank Congresswoman CHERFILUS-McCORMICK for the opportunity to speak. I know that this is an issue that is very dear to her not only because of her own familial ties to Haiti but so many of her constituents as well in Florida are crying out for support for their families and friends who remain there. They are Americans trying to ensure that their brothers and sisters, their family members, can, in fact, prosper. I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership on this issue.

I thank the Congressional Black Caucus for doing all that they can do. Of course, my sister from another mister, YVETTE CLARKE of Brooklyn, I thank her for always being there in the fight, as well.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman STACEY PLASKETT. Again, I thank our Congresswoman from New York, YVETTE CLARKE, for working tirelessly with us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON).

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honorable STACEY PLASKETT for her leadership, and I thank my colleague, the Honorable SHEILA CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, for yielding.

Much of the world today has their attention focused on Gaza, and it seems as if Haiti has been ignored. Mr. Speaker, when you consider the long and difficult journey of the Haitian people from bondage to freedom and all that has been done to destabilize and punish Haitian independence, I say to you that Haiti cannot be ignored.

It would be easy to blame the Haitian people for the overwhelming violence being committed on the streets of Port-au-Prince, in Jacmel, and in the countryside, but such thinking would be the result of a tragic reductionism more so intended to manipulate the facts than to teach them. What is happening in Haiti today is the result of what happens when empires and colonial powers conspire to make it economically impossible for liberated countries to flourish and survive.

To think that Haiti had to pay France the equivalent of what would be today \$21 billion in 1804 after Dessalines had declared independence—King Charles X of France, a slaver and

a colonial power, had the American Government, after its independence, enforce a payment to American, French, and German bankers and put a tax on the Haitian people for 150 years. Haitians did not stop paying French bankers until 1947.

Yes, a 150-year tax was put on the first freed African group of people to resist slavery and colonialism.

How is it even possible for the world to stand by and allow France to put a tax on the people of Haiti because they dared to do what Americans had done just 20 years prior to the Haitian Revolution?

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine the outcry in this country if Great Britain had required America to pay a freedom tax after the Revolutionary War to make up for lost wages and profits?

Americans would still be angry. Americans would be resentful. More importantly, Americans would still be recovering from having to dedicate most of its GDP to paying an unconscionable tax for the subsequent loans and interest needed to resolve it.

How did it happen that for 150 years the nation of Haiti was trapped in a vicious cycle of economic extortion and exploitation while the rest of the so-called civilized world acted as if making the victim pay the brutalizer was not a crime against humanity and the complete inversion of common sense?

This is what has happened to Haiti. This is the root cause and the base behind the bottomless music of chaos and violence happening in Haiti right now.

The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., said that violence is the language of the unheard, a point to which I shall add that criminality is the syntax and verbiage of the poor. People who have neither the means nor the opportunity to participate and benefit from the wealth of their own country will, in the end, act against the national interest because the politics of bread is unrelenting.

I stand with all of my colleagues who condemn the violence going on in Haiti because violence is never the answer. More than that, I call on all the Western powers to, once and for all, take their knees off of the neck of the Haitian economy. The world owes the Haitian people an apology and the real support Haiti has never received.

America should celebrate our longest and greatest democratic ally in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti. The Haitian Army fought with America in the American Revolution in Savannah, Georgia. We can end this violence not with soldiers but with real economic investment.

If the manifest destiny of America is to be concerned about the quality of life in our hemisphere, then the investment we make in Haiti is, in effect, an investment in the future stability of the neighborhood we live in. Charity begins at home, our Scriptures teach us. It is about time the Nation and the world support Haitians' self-determination.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Today, I stand before you, Mr. Speaker, to discuss the future of Haiti. Haiti is a country with an inspirational global history and a rich culture, but it has encountered numerous obstacles over the years, such as political turmoil and dire gang violence.

Gangs currently control 80 percent of the capital; 1.4 million Haitians are nearing famine; 362,000 people are internally displaced; and young girls are regularly victims of gender-based violence. In short, the gang violence has caused life in Haiti to be unbearable.

The Haitian people have been crying out for help, but the Republican Party has been holding up funding for the security mission to help more than 2 million people in Haiti for the last 6 months. The security mission in Haiti is critical to protecting the Haitian people and creating an environment necessary for peace, stability, democracy, and self-determination.

We are at a tipping point, and we need a solution now—no debates and no political games. Haiti cannot wait any longer for the Multinational Security Support Mission. Every single day we wait, we risk another life.

We must end this nightmare and terror facing the Haitian people. Instead of actively working toward a solution, Republicans are holding these funds to further their radical agenda.

Haiti is in our backyard. Its insecurity is a direct threat to America's security. No one wants to leave their homes; they are forced to.

Despite receiving 70 briefings since October 2023, Republicans continue to spread misinformation and are engaging in fearmongering toward Haitian migrants coming to the United States. They are refusing to propose real solutions while lives hang in the balance and our national security is under real threat.

Let me be clear. The United States supports the security of the Haitian people. I commend the Biden-Harris administration and Secretary Blinken for pledging a total of \$300 million to support the MSS. The Biden-Harris administration just announced an additional \$25 million in addition to humanitarian assistance for Haiti. This builds on the \$33 million for humanitarian assistance Secretary of State Blinken announced last month.

Republicans must stop playing these political games with Haitian lives and release their hold on the Multinational Security Support Mission now. The longer we hold the funds, the more Haitian people die and flee to the United States.

Recently, we have seen more Governors talking about this fear of Haitian people coming to our borders, but the truth is that if we step in now and release the funding, we would have the security necessary so no one has to leave their homes.

Every day, we see more children, women, boys, and girls who are being

brutalized, kidnapped, and raped in front of their families. Rape has been used as a tool to intimidate the Haitian people.

How can we stand as Americans who call Haiti and Haitian people our allies and not come to their defense?

How can we stand in this very moment when we see Haitian lives every single day being sacrificed and being killed and do nothing?

How can we play these political games while we have so many family members who are dying?

Being the only Haitian American in Congress and the first Democrat, it breaks my heart that we are in this place, and I can see my Republican counterparts playing these games.

Every single day, I live in fear of hearing another family member has died in Haiti. Every single day, we have more than 1.2 million Haitian Americans living in the United States who are in fear that family are being murdered. Right now, we have Haitian Americans who cannot be evacuated soon enough to get out of the country.

We have elderly people who came to the United States, worked very hard, and went back to retire in their home country but cannot get out of the country and are being threatened and beaten. We see children every single day being forced into being part of a gang and have been tasked with burning bodies and actually shooting on first sight when they see people.

How can we as Americans every single day see these atrocities and do nothing? How do we live and have a conscience and come to Congress and continue to play games?

We must do what is right for the Haitian people and the American people. We must live up to our greatness and put an end to these political games and do what is right.

As the leaders of the global economy and as the leaders of the international world, let us stop playing these games and finally lead with compassion.

Our strength is in our ability to come together and service all humanitarian people, all humanity. Let us act today and stop playing these games.

For the last 6 months, we have been begging for these funds to be released. To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, \$40 million being released for this mission is nothing compared to what we have spent in other regions, so why not for a country that is right in our backyard?

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the critical crisis that is occurring in Haiti, an increasing escalating situation.

The situation in Haiti is deteriorating and the Haitian government has recently declared a state of emergency.

In the last couple of years, Haiti has seen an increase in violence, including kidnappings and sexual violence in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince which have ravished the country.

At least 80 percent of the capital is under the control of gangs.

Many Haitian citizens cannot leave their homes for fear that they will never make it back.

In 2023, there were 5,000 murders and 2,000 kidnappings and over 300,000 people have been displaced within the country while another 1.4 million Haitians are near famine.

It is truly devastating to see Haiti in such a condition considering its history of resilience and fervent fighting spirit.

For decades, Haiti has faced significant challenges, including natural disasters and environmental shocks as well as multiple political crises.

Intensified gang violence and recurring political and civil unrest since July 2018 have severely exacerbated Haiti's dire economic and humanitarian conditions: unemployment and inflation are high; the national currency is volatile; fuel shortages are recurring and severe; foreign reserves are dangerously low; more than 60 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and more than four million Haitians face crisis- or emergency-level food insecurity.

Following the catastrophic events that occurred in 2018, I introduced H.R. 6325, the Continue American Safety Act (CASA) which provided temporary protected status for certain countries, such as Haiti.

The proportion of people in Haiti facing acute food insecurity has increased significantly, from 1 in 3 people in 2018 to almost 1 in 2 people in 2022, according to the study "Food security in Central America, Panama, Dominican Republic, Mexico and Haiti," published by the Inter-American Development Bank.

In addition to grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and an economic recession, President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated on July 7, 2021, and weeks later a 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit southern Haiti on August 14.

A nearly two-month long gang-led blockage of the nation's largest fuel terminal from late September to early November 2022 led to a nationwide fuel shortage, shutting down hospitals and water treatment facilities at the same time cholera reemerged for the first time since 2019.

While humanitarian assistance can alleviate some urgent needs, it will not, and cannot, address the root causes of the current economic and political paralysis in Haiti.

Haiti has been one of the closest, and longest-standing allies of the United States.

Haiti needs help because the stability of Haiti and its surrounding nations is interconnected. It is only through a unified voice that we will be able to experience a vibrant and successful Haiti that is a leader in the Caribbean.

I have supported legislation in the past, such as the introduction of the HOPE for Haitian Prosperity Act of 2023.

An Act that would extend trade preferences with Haiti, expand core labor standards, and provide technical assistance to the Haitian government.

It is imperative that we support Haiti and help with this ongoing crisis.

The Haiti Support Project is an initiative of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, who recently visited with my office here on Capitol Hill.

The primary mission of the Haiti Support Project is to marshal moral, political, and material support to assist the Haitian people to

develop a strong and vital democratic society and a vibrant and sustainable economy as a free and self-determining people.

Given Haiti's unique history as the first Black Republic in the western hemisphere, the Haiti Support Project seeks to build a constituency and effective base of support for Haiti in the U.S., primarily focusing on mobilizing the human and material resources of African Americans in collaboration with Haitian Americans.

Although democracy in Haiti requires a Haitian-led solution, there are many ways we can assist our Haitian brothers and sisters because public safety should be our number one priority, especially in countries outside of our own.

It is imperative that we support Haiti in its desire to transition towards free and fair elections while applying pressure to political and economic actors who are exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Haiti.

Haiti's transition to a functional democracy is important to the United States.

Strong democratic institutions, including holding regular free and fair elections, can help guarantee Haiti's democratic traditions and ensure a voice for the Haitian people in their governance.

By promoting democratic core values, such as respect for human rights, the rule of law, and economic development both in the region and around the world, we can be the prime example for country development and assistance.

Additionally, we must subvert the trade and sale of illegal guns which is a major contributor to Haiti's growing gang crisis and the current instability that plagues the country.

Haitians have long asked for safety from gang violence and they deserve help that the U.S. can provide.

Illicit arms trafficking from the United States to the Caribbean is a regional and national security threat.

In 2022, the Department of Homeland Security reported an increase in the number, caliber, and types of firearms illegally trafficked to the Caribbean.

The steady flow of illicit firearms has exacerbated crime and migration in the Caribbean.

In Haiti, illicit firearms from the United States have enabled violent gangs to control over 80 percent of Port-au-Prince and have caused a dramatic increase in migration to the United States.

In the 117th Congress, I also supported the introduction of H. Res. 670, Condemning the inhumane treatment of Haitian migrants at the southern border of the United States, as they should not be mistreated for fleeing a country riddled with violence.

My colleague, Rep. SHEILA CHERFILUS-McCORMICK and others have introduced the Caribbean Arms Trafficking Causes Harm (CATCH) Act to curb U.S. Firearms Trafficking to the Caribbean.

By requiring the Coordinator for Caribbean Firearms Prosecutions to report on their implementation of anti-firearm-trafficking provisions in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, this legislation will combat firearms trafficking from the United States to the Caribbean.

We must also invest our resources in the people of Haiti by building schools, encouraging education, creating job opportunities. Education is the key that unlocks the possibilities of the future; it changes lives.

Sixty-four percent of the Haitian population is under 24 years of age.

Working to foster a culture of education in Haiti is the greatest investment we can make in eliminating poverty, boosting economic growth, strengthening democracy, and promoting prosperity.

Finally, as members of Congress, we must collaborate to unlock the \$40 million in aid that the Biden administration has requested to help stabilize Haiti amid an increase in gang violence there, despite warnings that continued chaos could lead to a humanitarian crisis and drive migrants fleeing the country into the United States.

Haiti's insecurity is a threat to America's security.

It is past time for the United States to step up and come together and carry out our responsibility as the leader of the free world.

□ 2100

BRING THEM HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) for 30 minutes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, it has been 186 days since the barbaric Hamas attack on October 7, in which more than 1,200 people were brutally murdered and more than 250 taken hostage. It has been 186 days, and still 133 people, including 8 Americans, are being held hostage in Gaza.

Many of the 133 are known to be dead, including 3 of the Americans. Some were murdered on October 7, and their bodies taken into Gaza. Some, known to be alive in captivity, have been murdered by their captors, like Elad Katzir, whose body was recovered just last week in Khan Yunis.

It has been 186 days, more than 6 months, and there is no indication of their medical status, no visits from the Red Cross, no word of when they might come home.

For the families, 186 unbearable days of wondering if their loved one is dead or alive, is being tortured, or is a victim of sexual violence.

Mr. Speaker, 186 days is unconscionable.

For many weeks, negotiations facilitated by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar have sought to achieve a cease-fire and bring hostages home. Israel has accepted the terms. Hamas has, to date, rejected them. The world waits for Hamas' response.

As Secretary of State Antony Blinken noted earlier today: "It is astounding to me that the world is almost deafeningly silent when it comes to Hamas."

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to once again bring urgent and necessary attention to the hostages still held in Gaza. All deserve to be named, but I will list the Americans, many of whose families are with us in the gallery here today: Edan Alexander, Sagui Dekel-Chen, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Omer Neutra, Keith Siegel, Judi Weinstein and Gad Haggai, and Itay Chen.

My heart goes out to the families and friends of those hostages who have yet to be released, who have no information about the well-being of their loved ones, whether they are alive, injured, or dead.

I refuse to let the hostages be forgotten. We must bring them home.

Mr. Speaker, tonight, with my colleagues, we stand on the House floor imploring Congress to work to save the hostages. We also honor the families of those who were killed or taken hostage on October 7.

Tonight, a number of these families present in the House gallery continue to call for our government to do all it can to bring the remaining hostages home including: Rachel Goldberg and Jon Polin, parents of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a 23-year-old Chicago native who attended the Tribe of Nova music festival on October 7.

Jonathan Dekel-Chen, father of Sagui Dekel-Chen, a 35-year-old husband and father who was 200 yards from his kibbutz when Hamas terrorists invaded the area on October 7. After sounding the alarm for his neighbors, he joined the kibbutz' security team to push back on Hamas. His mother was also taken captive but escaped when an IDF helicopter shot at the vehicle taking her away.

Ronen and Orna Neutra, parents of Omer Neutra, a 21-year-old member of the IDF who was in a tank defending the Gaza border on October 7. He grew up in New York and was living in Israel before attending university in the United States.

Adi and Yael Alexander, parents of Edan Alexander, a 19-year-old member of the IDF who was stationed near Gaza at the time of the attack.

Andrea Weinstein, sister of Judi Weinstein, who was killed on October 7. Judi, age 70, grew up in Canada but was born in New York.

Liz Hirsh Naftali, the great aunt of 3-year-old Abigail, who was kidnapped and taken alone to Gaza after her parents were murdered in front of her eyes by Hamas terrorists.

We honor the memories of those who have died, and we pray for those who are still in captivity.

I thank all my colleagues who have joined me here today as we work to make sure that we bring those hostages home.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material into the RECORD on the subject of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida, (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), my good friend and colleague who joined me in Israel just 2 weeks ago on a mission to understand what Israel was going

through and how we can make a difference.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding and for his leadership in calling all of us together in support of bringing all of our hostages home.

I am reminding the world that Hamas still has American hostages in its grip. We are joined tonight in the gallery by several of their family members who have spent every night for over half a year praying, mourning, hoping beyond hope for their loved ones' safe return.

Our number one job as elected officials is providing for the safety, security, and integrity of the American people. We cannot rest while a terrorist group that has murdered Americans continues to hold Americans hostage.

Nothing is more critical than what President Biden and his administration are doing every day. He is fighting tirelessly to bring Americans and the rest of the hostages home right now through a temporary cease-fire agreement.

It is unconscionable that Hamas continues to reject a hostage deal and hold over 130 hostages in Gaza. It is despicable that these sick, violent fiends refuse to allow the hostages to be reunited with their families and cling like vultures to the remains of innocent civilians they have tortured, starved, and murdered in order to use them as political leverage.

Our message to these families, our regional partners, and the American people is consistent and clear. Hamas must not succeed. The hostages must come home.

I joined my colleague from Illinois 2 weeks ago, and we both led side-by-side congressional delegations, I for women Members of Congress, where we met with the parents of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who we have met with numerous times, and many of the family members that are here tonight.

Rachel and Jon are here tonight as well, and their strength and commitment alongside all of the American families to be reunited with their loved ones is inspiring. The love of a parent knows no bounds.

Once the hostages are released, we look forward to welcoming you all back to this Chamber in celebration of your families being made whole again. Please know that I, personally and on behalf of my constituents, carry all of your loved ones in my heart each and every day.

I am proud President Biden and Vice President HARRIS have stood by Israel's side all of this time, defending the American and Israeli people and using leverage to push our allies and partners to get a deal done.

There has been a deal on the table, and that continues to be negotiated today, spearheaded by President Biden, backed by Israel, Egypt, and Qatar, that will get hostages home, aid into Gaza, and a pause in the fighting.