

I thank Mayor Cruz for his dedication to the people of Hagatna. His leadership has been instrumental in making the village what it is today. I wish him the very best in retirement, and I am certain his legacy will be an inspiration to all future leaders to come.

HONORING DR. VINCENT DUENAS

Mr. MOYLAN. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor a remarkable individual who has made significant contributions to the field of medicine, Dr. Vincent Duenas. His deep passion for healing and his tireless dedication to patient care has made a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals in my community, the island of Guam.

As he retires from his position, I thank him for 45 years of service at the Guam Memorial Hospital Authority.

In addition to his distinguished career as an internal medicine doctor, he has also held the titles of GMH's associate hospital administrator of medical services and medical director of respiratory therapy, among many other positions.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Dr. Duenas' career is his exceptional ability to provide compassionate care. He has fostered an environment where patients can feel heard, understood, and supported.

Aside from his time in the medical field, Dr. Duenas also served our Nation in uniform for 20 years. He was a member of the Guam Army National Guard, ultimately retiring with the rank of colonel.

Dr. Duenas' accomplishments and contributions to medicine are truly inspiring. His dedication, expertise, and passion have made a positive impact on countless lives in Guam.

Today, we honor Dr. Duenas and wish him the very best in his retirement. I am certain his legacy will continue to inspire future doctors to come.

HONORING CARL PARKER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. D'ESPOSITO). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WEBER of Texas) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of one Senator Carl Allen Parker, a true southeast Texas giant.

Born in Port Arthur during the Great Depression, Senator Parker dedicated decades to serving the people of southeast Texas. He was a distinguished lawyer, statesman, and beloved native son of Port Arthur.

Senator Parker leaves behind a legacy of unwavering dedication to public service and tireless advocacy for the people of our great State. He will be remembered for his 34 years as a member of the Texas Legislature, starting with his election to the House of Representatives in 1962 and then later to the Texas Senate, where he served until 1995.

As we mourn the passing of this remarkable man, let us also celebrate his extraordinary life and the lasting im-

pact he had on our State. May his legacy inspire future generations of public servants to follow in his footsteps and continue the work of building a better Texas for us all.

HONORING JUDGE RANDALL HUFSTETLER

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the extraordinary life of the Honorable Kenneth Randall Hufstetler, State district judge of the 300th District Court of Brazoria County. For his relentless dedication to public service and remarkable contributions to our community, he will always be remembered as a Brazoria County icon.

Randy was a Texan whose life exemplified faith, family, and service. His tenure as a judge was marked by his steadfast commitment to upholding our United States Constitution. With integrity and diligence, he interpreted and applied the law to ensure fairness and justice in every single case that crossed his bench.

Despite losing his battle with cancer too soon, Randy's legacy of courage and strength will endure, inspiring us all. Though he may no longer walk among us, Randy's impact will continue to be felt in the lives he touched and the values he instilled.

To his beautiful family, Danette and kids, Randy was the epitome of love, strength, and devotion, cherishing each moment with them as the greatest gift of his life.

To Judge Kenneth Randall Hufstetler, we say farewell with gratitude and admiration.

HONORING GERALD SULLIVAN

Mr. WEBER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a distinguished Texan, Gerald Sullivan, who has been selected as the 2024 Buck N' Ball honoree.

Gerald's story is nothing but a pure Lone Star legend, showcasing grit, guts, and a whole lot of Texas-sized success.

From Galveston County to the halls of Texas A&M, Gerald's entrepreneurial spirit has left an indelible mark. As chairman of the Port of Galveston, he steered us through Hurricane Ike's wrath, ensuring our ports and Galveston's resilience.

His dedication to education and sharing insights with students reflects his commitment to the next generation, not to mention the Sullivan family's century-long legacy in the beef cattle industry, grazing cattle in salt grass pastures along the Coastal Bend and then shipping them from the Port of Galveston to Caribbean nations like Haiti and Cuba.

I congratulate Gerald and Susanne, his lovely bride, on Gerald receiving the Buck' N Ball award from the Bryan Museum in Galveston, where they are preserving Texas history. Gerald's commitment and dedication are inspiring to southeast Texas, and I am glad and proud to call him a friend.

DETERIORATING CONDITIONS IN NIGER

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

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD part II of the interim report that I have prepared for the House of Representatives titled: "Unwelcome in Niger."

[From the Office of Congressman Matt Gaetz]

PART II INTERIM REPORT—UNWELCOME IN NIGER
SUMMARY

More than 1,000 U.S. service members currently stationed in Niger, Africa, at Air Base 101 and Air Base 201 are in danger. They are currently being treated as pawns by both the U.S. government and the government of Niger (Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la patrie or the National Council for the Safeguard of the Fatherland) as a diplomatic negotiation regarding the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Niger is ongoing.

Currently, U.S. troops are being denied fresh rotations and needed medications for chronic illnesses as diplomatic overflights are stalled.

On information and belief, the Biden administration, and particularly the U.S. State Department, are concealing the dangerous conditions for U.S. troops in Niger to avoid the embarrassing reveal that their Africa strategy has failed. It has led to little more than collapsed governments, coups, and orders to leave countries we once deemed a "model" for U.S. cooperation, as Russia and China continue to advance their interests.

BACKGROUND

On April 17, 2024, this office filed with the House an initial report on troop conditions in Niger, Africa. A copy of this report is attached hereto as Exhibit "A."

The report detailed an unfolding scandal, risking troop welfare to avoid the diplomatic embarrassment as the Biden administration has deployed an Africa strategy rife with coups, failures, and functionally abandoned U.S. service members. All with little to show for the billions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer funds wasted in the continent.

The Report detailed specific concerns expressed by troops in Niger, Africa, their belief that intelligence regarding their condition was being suppressed by U.S. Embassy Niger, and the Department of State's inability to negotiate diplomatic overflights to achieve troop rotations and deliver life-sustaining supplies, such as clean water and medicine for chronic conditions.

The report further illuminated the presence of Russian troops at Air Base 101, behind the wire. This is unprecedented.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES

WITHDRAWAL

On April 20, 2024, the Biden administration fessed up that U.S. troops would be leaving Niger following the embarrassing demand to do so by the government of Niger. Unfortunately, this announcement has neither eased tensions nor facilitated better well-being for U.S. troops. During the negotiations surrounding the withdrawal, the U.S. government has not successfully obtained permissions to resupply U.S. installations in Niger, leaving our troops stuck and functionally abandoned, unable to return home.

DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT, NIGER EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON

On April 29, 2024, Congressman Matt Gaetz met with Chargé d'Affaires Idi Hassane at the Washington, D.C.-based Niger Embassy.

Mr. Hassane assured Congressman Gaetz that all overflights requested by the U.S.

government for troop rotations and medicine would be approved. Congressman Gaetz memorialized this attestation by letter, attached hereto as Exhibit "B."

Unfortunately, the Chargé d'Affaires representations have proven false. This office continued to receive reports from service members and their families that overflights were not occurring, that medicine was not being delivered, and that negotiations were stalling. This induced subsequent demands from this office to the government of Niger, through their Chargé d'Affaires, attached hereto as Exhibit "C."

CURRENT CONDITIONS OF U.S. TROOPS IN NIGER—LACK OF MEDICINE

The initial report detailed statements by several of the USAF public-health leaders at Air Base 101. We reported then that if additional supplies were not provided by May, several key medicines would be unavailable. This has now come to fruition. On May 2, 2024, one active-duty spouse wrote ["My husband specifically is on cholesterol medication for his heart and at this point in time he has run out of medication. I mailed him a medication refill . . . that is currently sitting in Germany because Niger still will not approve flights."] A copy of this spouse's correspondence is attached hereto as Exhibit "D." Lacking medicine has also been a concern expressed by other family members, with specificity (see below).

As stated by another service member in Niger:

Since two weeks ago we still have not received supplies, AB 101 is still short on blood and medications, here at 201 we are mission parts that should have been here months ago. They are struggling getting even MEdevac planes in for people that need to be seen at a higher level of care . . . Why are we still here?" (See Exhibit "E")

And another:

"The situation here at Air Base 101 and 201 (I'm here at 201) is a failure on the United States Government." We keep getting told "talks are good" well if they are going good, why have no planes come in for our replacements? . . . We have not a resupply mission here since March. The morale here is terrible and it needs to be fixed ASAP!" (Exhibit "F")

EXTORTION TO LEAVE

An FL-01 constituent and father of an active-duty service member in Niger relayed to this office that local officials are "extorting passengers in order for them to bring luggage through the airport." This account is confirmed by the spouse of a military contractor currently stationed in Niger, whose correspondence is attached as Exhibit "G."

RUSSIANS ON BASE

The initial report alleged that Russian troops were allowed onto U.S. installations in Niger. This is unprecedented and dangerous. Reuters has now confirmed this claim, see Exhibit "H." This continues to be a source of safety concern for our troops and their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Biden Administration must immediately resupply U.S. troops in Niger. Our service members, contractors and their families must not be allowed to be used as leverage by the government of Niger or anyone else during a military retrograde. Moreover, the Biden administration should not spasm into a hasty retrograde which would leave hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. military material in the hands of terrorists, militants, or Russians. The Biden administration must fly in the needed water, medication supplies and troop rotations, under fighter escort if necessary. If this does not occur, the Biden administration has rendered

these brave Americans hostages of a hostile foreign regime.

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, the link to the full report can be found here: <https://gaetz.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/gaetz.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/Part%20II%20Interim%20Report%20-%20Unwelcome%20in%20Niger.pdf>.

I rise to warn this body of the deteriorating conditions in the African country of Niger and to give rise to the concern of servicemembers and contractors.

More than a thousand of them right now are functionally being held hostage in Niger. They are being used as pawns during a negotiation that has left America at the bended knee of Third World criminals and thugs as our troops seek medicine, freshwater, and troop rotations.

How did we get here, with more than 1,100 Americans endangered right now in Niger? It started back in March 2023. Secretary of State Antony Blinken went to Niger and proclaimed that it was a model of resilience, a platform for great democracy. It would be where America would execute its Africa strategy.

One year later, almost to the day, there was a coup in Niger. Guess who overthrew the government that we said was the great model of resilience? The people we trained. We trained the coup leaders to go throw out the democratically elected Government of Niger.

I know this will surprise you, but after that occurred, they say they want our bases, which U.S. taxpayers have poured more than a billion dollars into, gone. They want our servicemembers gone.

I came to this floor after hearing from some of my constituents who are stationed in Niger. After the overthrow of the government, there weren't resupply flights. They said: Congressman, we are going to be out of medicine in May if we don't get this sorted out.

□ 1215

Three days after I filed part I of the report that I am supplementing today, the Biden administration announced that we will be leaving Niger—a welcome sign, I am sure—but the leaving didn't actually happen. We have people who are now more than 200 days into a 180-day rotation.

While the negotiation regarding retrograde and withdrawal are ongoing, the government in Niger is using the well-being and health of our servicemembers as leverage to get what they want out of our government. Our troops aren't getting medicine for malaria, cholesterol, blood pressure, and other chronic conditions.

I have received letters from the wives and fathers of the people who are in Niger now, and they say: We know that our family members are being extorted by the local governments. When they try to leave, it is hundreds of dollars to even bring a bag through the airport.

We know that Russians are behind the wire.

Do you know what a real U.S. President would do? They would say that C-130s are on their way to Niger today with the water, medicine, and food that our troops need, that they will have a full fighter pilot escort there.

If the Government of Niger or any other third-world thug tries to even turn on their air defense systems, we should show those leaders and those thugs what the target package looks like on their houses and their family members.

It should not be Americans who are suffering because President Biden and Secretary Blinken are so embarrassed that their strategy in Africa failed that they are willing to let Americans' conditions deteriorate.

They are willing to let our military spouses and family members wonder what is going to happen to their loved ones with their blood pressure rising and no blood pressure medication or be concerned about what will happen now that we are in May and there is not sufficient malaria medication. We should always keep our people's well-being at the forefront of our minds.

Today, we should be resupplying our troops in Niger, Africa, and we should dare these thugs and criminals to mess with us while we are doing that. This is a total embarrassment, and saving politicians and people like Biden and Blinken from embarrassment is not worth putting U.S. troops at risk.

I will stay on this. I will stay on our government and the Government of Niger to ensure that our military members and their families are appropriately treated, and their concerns are elevated to the highest levels of this House.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 17 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

Lord of the universe, look down upon Your people and grant us Your peace. From generation to generation, we have found ways to disparage and destroy one another, allowing racism, prejudice, and discrimination to color our judgment and enrage our worst selves.