

Under Sonbol's leadership, the foundation has helped launch a variety of student support programs, such as the Veterans Success Center, the Student Assistance Fund Endowment, the Basic Needs Center, the Guardian Scholars Program, and more. Earlier this year, the program Endow-a-Bed launched under Sonbol's leadership, providing free room and board for 10 students in the school's new student housing.

The foundation has also worked to fund educational and extracurricular opportunities for students, such as the Sierra College Athletics Program and career and technical education programs. Moreover, they have helped provide services to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and have supported programs that embrace a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the school.

Valued by so many, Sonbol is known for her leadership and guidance in the foundation. Her passion for supporting students on their educational journey encourages those around her to put students first, as she does. Her devoted efforts have made a lasting difference in the lives of countless Sierra College students and have contributed to the growth and success of the school.

As a former educator, I have appreciated the opportunity to work with Sonbol since my time in elected office. It is a true honor to represent such inspirational and effective community leaders like Sonbol.

Therefore, on behalf of the United States House of Representatives, I am honored to join the community in celebrating Sonbol Aliabadi's successful career and service to the Sierra College community over the past two decades, and I wish her the very best in her next chapter.

SELF-ENRICHMENT REWARDED, OVERSIGHT BLINDFOLDED

(Mr. IVEY of Maryland was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. IVEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a deeply troubling pattern of behavior that strikes at the very heart of the American justice system. It is a pattern where self-enrichment is rewarded, oversight is blindfolded, and rule of law is bent to serve the powerful.

I sit on the Appropriations Committee, and we had a chance last week to hear the testimony of the Acting Attorney General, Mr. Blanche. I asked him about what I thought was a blatant pay-for-pardon scheme, and this involves the Binance Corporation.

Let me walk through some of the facts of what happened there, as I did there with the Attorney General.

In late 2023, Binance agreed to pay a penalty of \$4.36 billion. A U.S. judge approved the guilty plea and settlement for the anti-money laundering and sanctions in February 2024. In other words, the chairman of Binance and the company itself pled guilty to crimes that involved money laun-

dering. This involved money laundering that was helping groups like ISIS and al-Qaida, enemies of the United States, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

In December 2024, Mr. Zhao and Mr. Witkoff met in Abu Dhabi at the Bitcoin MENA 2024 Conference. Mr. Witkoff is the special envoy for the Trump administration who negotiates agreements with respect to the Middle East and does this on behalf of the Trump administration. They discussed the violations of anti-money laundering laws while Mr. Zhao was serving at Binance.

In October 2025, Mr. Trump granted a full pardon to Mr. Zhao. That meant that they did not have to pay back the money that was part of the fine, and it wiped away the conviction and the related elements of that.

According to The Wall Street Journal, part of what happened between the pardon and the meeting was that there was a payment that was made. That was money that was paid, according to The Wall Street Journal, from Binance, which took steps that catapulted the Trump family venture's new stablecoin product. The Trump family venture was WLF, and it dealt with cryptocurrency. Members of Trump's family, two of his sons, and Mr. Witkoff all had vested interests in that company.

While they put the money into the WLF transaction, that enhanced the credibility and pushed up the market value of the WLF company from \$127 million to over \$2.1 billion.

I asked Mr. Blanche, given that he had this meeting, then the money, and then the pardon, did he think it would be important to appoint a special prosecutor to review the transaction just to make sure that there was no misconduct that took place, whether it was on behalf of the President or any of the other factors or players who were involved, and he said no.

A special prosecutor would be someone who the Attorney General could appoint in order to have a full and independent investigation done, but he refused to do that.

It is important to put this into context, too. Just in the first 3 months of this year, Mr. Trump has engaged in 3,700 stock transactions personally, and his net worth has grown from \$2.3 billion to \$6.5 billion since 2024. That is a \$4.2 billion increase in his personal wealth since he returned to the White House.

There are other issues that we should raise. In fact, the sentences to my right were taken from a New York Times article that chronicles many of these types of issues. Nvidia stock is another one where there was a potential benefit of \$5 million to WLF and the Trump family.

I am not saying that there was or was not misconduct by Mr. Trump. We don't know that yet, but it is important to make sure that somebody who is independent, objective, and knowl-

edgeable would conduct that kind of investigation.

So far, the Trump administration has refused to do that, so I am going to be introducing legislation that I think will help to facilitate that. If you have a President who doesn't want to have his Attorney General conduct any investigations into what his administration is doing, we should have other avenues to move that forward. We have in the past, like the Independent Counsel Act. We also could beef up the inspector general law which was put in place after Watergate took place and was put in place specifically because of the Nixon administration misconduct and the failure to have anybody in the Nixon administration investigate that.

□ 1230

You might recall that John Mitchell was the Attorney General. He ended up going to jail because he participated in that misconduct. We need to make sure we don't find ourselves in this situation again where we have got the fox guarding the henhouse.

We will offer this legislation soon, but I think it is critical to make sure we understand a couple of things in the wake of this. We need to keep an eye on the Trump administration, and we need to remember, too, that after the testimony he gave, he was promoted to Attorney General by the President.

RECOGNIZING LIVES LOST AND SURVIVORS OF 1967 ISRAELI AT- TACK ON U.S. OBSERVATION SHIP

(Mr. MASSIE of Kentucky was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. MASSIE. Mr. Speaker, it is my great honor, maybe one of the biggest honors of my lifetime, to stand here on the floor and do something that is 59 years overdue, to recognize the survivors and those who gave their lives on the USS *Liberty* 59 years ago today, when they were viciously attacked by IDF jets and also after that by torpedo boats.

I am going to tell you a little bit of their story. By the way, there are at least a dozen of them here today with us. I just met with them in my office, and they related this story to me.

It was a clear day. The USS *Liberty* was one of the most technologically sophisticated ships in the Navy, but it was virtually unarmed. It was sent to observe the Six-Day War going on in the Middle East between Israel and its neighbors.

It arrived on June 7, and the weather was clear. Planes came out to meet them, to investigate. Then on the next day, on June 8, when they started the day, the visibility was unlimited and the American flag was flying proudly on the USS *Liberty*. More planes came from Israel to surveil the ship. They thought they were in good shape, but what happened next surprised them all.

French Mirage jets showed up, and for 25 minutes, strafed and attacked

the USS *Liberty*. They shot rockets. They shot 30-millimeter cannons into the hull and into the ship. They even dropped napalm on the bridge of the ship. This was an effort to kill everybody on board. There was no intention of taking prisoners.

After the 25 grueling minutes of attack on this virtually unarmed ship, when they thought things were over and they could recover, the torpedo boats showed up, three torpedo boats. They launched four torpedoes. One of them hit the hull of the USS *Liberty* and killed 25 people instantly. It blew a 40-by-40-foot hole in the side of this ship. They were intent on sinking it. They were intent on not having a single survivor.

According to eyewitness accounts, the Israelis machine-gunned the lifeboats that they put down. They machine-gunned the firefighters who were on the deck. They were bringing the wounded and the dead to the mess hall to triage them. They had one doctor who was trying to help them all, put a few stitches in. It was harrowing.

It was amazing that if not for that crew, that boat would have sunk that day.

But it still wasn't over. Helicopters showed up, combat helicopters. The USS *Liberty*, even though their signals were being jammed by the Israelis, got a signal out. There were ships that tried to respond. The USS *Saratoga* and the USS *America* sent planes. Both of them sent planes to help the USS *Liberty*. And something happened that has never happened before to a ship under attack: The planes were recalled. This has never happened before. They sat there for 17 hours with 34 dead and 174 wounded out of 294 crewmembers. That is over a 70 percent casualty rate, which is unheard of. The Israelis were intent on leaving no survivors.

What about our own military? Why did they not send anybody for 17 hours to help these men?

So what really happened? The official reports say that it was a case of mistaken identity. But if you listen to Dean Rusk, former Secretary of State; Richard Helms, CIA Director; Bobby Ray Inman, head of the NSA; Captain Ward Boston, who was the chief council of the court of inquiry; and if you listen to Admiral Moore, who served in Pearl Harbor, Midway, commanded both the Atlantic and Pacific fleet, and was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, none of these distinguished men think this was an accident. They think it was intentional murder by the country of Israel, either as a false flag operation or because they simply didn't want anybody observing what they were doing that day.

Well, I have got a call to action for everybody here. Honor these individuals. Quit ignoring that they exist. Go to their website, ussliberty.org. Support them while they are still alive. They need closure. Let's give them closure. Let's have an investigation. Let's pass a resolution honoring them. It is

long overdue. Then they can have their justice.

Mr. Speaker, I insert into the RECORD the declaration of Ward Boston declaring that the only official court of inquiry was invalid.

AFFIDAVIT OF CAPTAIN WARD BOSTON, USN. JAG (RET.), SENIOR COUNSEL TO THE U.S. NAVY COURT OF INQUIRY

For more than 30 years, I have remained silent on the topic of the USS *Liberty*. I am a military man and when orders come in from the Secretary of Defense and President of the United States, I follow them.

However, recent attempts to rewrite history compel me to share the truth.

In June of 1967, while serving as a Captain in the Judge Advocates General Department of the Navy, I was assigned as senior legal counsel for the Navy's Court of Inquiry into the brutal attack on the USS *Liberty*, which had occurred on June 8th.

The late Admiral Isaac C. Kidd, president of the Court, and I were given only one week to gather evidence for the Navy's official investigation into the attack, despite the fact that we both had estimated that a proper Court of Inquiry into an attack of this magnitude would take at least six months to conduct.

Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., then Commander-in-chief, Naval Forces Europe (CINCUSNAVEUR), at his headquarters in London, had charged Admiral Kidd (in a letter dated June 10, 1967) to:

"inquire into all the pertinent facts and circumstances leading to and connected with the armed attack: damage resulting therefrom; and deaths of and injuries to Naval personnel."

Despite the short amount of time we were given, we gathered a vast amount of evidence including hours of heartbreaking testimony from the young survivors.

The evidence was clear. Both Admiral Kidd and I believed with certainty that this attack which killed 34 American sailors and injured 172 others, was a deliberate effort to sink an American ship and murder its entire crew. Each evening, after hearing testimony all day, we often spoke our private thoughts concerning what we had seen and heard. I recall Admiral Kidd repeatedly referring to the Israeli Forces responsible for the attack as "murderous bastards." It was our shared belief, based on the documentary evidence and testimony we received first hand, that the Israeli attack was planned and deliberate, and could not possibly have been an accident.

I am certain that the Israeli pilots that undertook the attack, as well as their superiors who had ordered the attack, were aware that the ship was American.

I saw the flag, which had visibly identified the ship as American, riddled with bullet holes and heard testimony that made it clear that the Israelis intended there be no survivors.

Not only did the Israelis attack the ship with napalm, gunfire, and missiles, Israeli torpedo boats machine-gunned three lifeboats that had been launched in an attempt by the crew to save the most seriously wounded—a war crime.

Admiral Kidd and I both felt it necessary to travel to Israel to interview the Israelis who took part in the attack. Admiral Kidd telephoned Admiral McCain to discuss making arrangements. Admiral Kidd later told me that Admiral McCain was adamant that we were not to travel to Israel or contact the Israelis concerning this matter.

Regrettably, we did not receive into evidence, and the court did not consider any of the more than sixty witness declarations

from men who had been hospitalized and were unable to testify in person.

I am outraged at the efforts of the apologists for Israel in this country to claim that this attack was a case of "mistaken identity."

In particular, the recent publication of Jay Cristol's book, *The Liberty Incident*, twists the facts and misrepresents the views of those of us who investigated the attack.

It is Cristol's insidious attempt to whitewash the facts that has pushed me to speak out.

I know from personal conversations I had with Admiral Kidd that President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered him to conclude that the attack was a case of "mistaken identity" despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Admiral Kidd told me, after returning from Washington, D.C. that he had been ordered to sit down with two civilians from either the White House or the Defense Department, and rewrite portions of the court's findings.

Admiral Kidd also told me that he had been ordered to "put the lid" on everything having to do with the attack on the USS *Liberty*. We were never to speak of it and we were to caution everyone else involved that they could never speak of it again.

I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of that statement as I know that the Court of Inquiry transcript that has been released to the public is not the same one that I certified and sent off to Washington.

I know this because it was necessary, due to the exigencies of time, to hand correct and initial a substantial number of pages. I have examined the released version of the transcript and I did not see any pages that bore my hand corrections and initials. Also, the original did not have any deliberately blank pages, as the released version does. Finally, the testimony of Lt. Painter concerning the deliberate machine gunning of the life rafts by the Israeli torpedo boat crews, which I distinctly recall being given at the Court of Inquiry and included in the original transcript, is now missing and has been excised.

Following the conclusion of the Court of Inquiry, Admiral Kidd and I remained in contact. Though we never spoke of the attack in public, we did discuss it between ourselves, on occasion. Every time we discussed the attack, Admiral Kidd was adamant that it was a deliberate, planned attack on an American ship.

In 1990, I received a telephone call from Jay Cristol, who wanted to interview me concerning the functioning of the Court of Inquiry. I told him that I would not speak to him on that subject and prepared to hang up the telephone. Cristol then began asking me about my personal background and other, non-Court of Inquiry related matters. I endeavored to answer these questions and politely extricate myself from the conversation. Cristol continued to return to the subject of the Court of Inquiry, which I refused to discuss with him. Finally, I suggested that he contact Admiral Kidd and ask him about the Court of Inquiry.

Shortly after my conversation with Cristol, I received a telephone call from Admiral Kidd inquiring about Cristol and what he was up to. The Admiral spoke of Cristol in disparaging terms and even opined that "Cristol must be an Israeli agent." I don't know if he meant that literally or it was his way of expressing his disgust for Cristol's highly partisan, pro-Israeli approach to questions involving USS *Liberty*.

At no time did I ever hear Admiral Kidd speak of Cristol other than in highly disparaging terms. I find Cristol's claims of a "close friendship" with Admiral Kidd to be utterly incredible. I also find it impossible to

believe the statements he attributes to Admiral Kidd, concerning the attack on USS Liberty.

Several years later, I received a letter from Cristol that contained what he purported to be his notes of our prior conversation. These "notes" were grossly incorrect and bore no resemblance in reality to that discussion. I find it hard to believe that these "notes" were a product of mistake, rather than an attempt to deceive. I informed Cristol that I disagreed with his recollection of our conversation and that he was wrong. Cristol made several attempts to arrange for the two of us to meet in person and talk but I always found ways to avoid doing this. I did not wish to meet with Cristol, as we had nothing in common and I did not trust him.

Contrary to the misinformation presented by Cristol and others, it is important for the American people to know that it is clear that Israel is responsible for deliberately attacking an American ship and murdering American sailors, whose bereaved shipmates have lived with this egregious conclusion for many years.

Dated: January 8, 2004, Coronado, California.

Signed Ward Boston, Jr., Captain, JAGC USN (Ret.), Senior Counsel to the USS Liberty Court of Inquiry

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will remind all persons in the gallery that they are here as guests of the House and that any manifestation of approval or disapproval of proceedings is in violation of the rules of the House.

NATION LOSING ITS MORAL COMPASS

(Ms. STANSBURY of New Mexico was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Speaker, I rise on the floor this afternoon because I believe this Nation is losing its moral compass, led by a President who is more interested in ballrooms and bullying reporters than the rights and the dignity of our basic human rights as Americans.

This week, this body will consider a \$70 billion package of funding for ICE to continue a cruel and inhuman detention system that has robbed countless Americans of their freedom and human dignity; that has fueled a massive for-profit private prison industry with billions of taxpayer dollars on the backs of the suffering of our people; that has torn families apart, incarcerated children, killed dozens in detention, violated human and civil liberties, and left millions of people in this country living in fear every day.

Now, the leadership of this body wants to approve another \$70 billion on top of the more than \$100 billion that they already gave them so that the Trump administration can continue to terrorize our families and communities without any checks. This is not okay. This body has lost its moral compass.

It follows after last week as this body passed appropriations bills that cut

hundreds of millions of dollars in food assistance to children, not just children here in the United States but abroad. In a time when hunger is higher now in this country today than it was during COVID, they chose to cut food assistance to American children and children across the world.

Last week, in their agriculture bill, they cut food, housing, and basic infrastructure for rural communities and food to children.

Now, they want another blank check for ICE?

What next? The President is asking for \$1.5 trillion for more bombs for illegal wars to continue the suffering abroad.

That is why I am here today to stand, to fight, to fight back, to reclaim the dignity of this body, the moral compass of this country.

Last week, we finally passed a War Powers Resolution to end the war in Iran. We did not succeed yet in passing a War Powers Resolution to end the war in Lebanon, but we cannot stand by and let this reckless President wage illegal wars in the Middle East and empower an out-of-control foreign leader, who even this weekend further threatened the peace of the Middle East through continued attacks. It must stop. Congress must assert not only our Constitutional authority but reclaim our moral compass.

As we stand here in this Chamber, violence continues abroad. Over the weekend, bombs and firefights shelled communities in Lebanon, Israel, and Iran. In Lebanon, more than 3,500 people have been killed, nearly 11,000 injured, and more than a million people have been displaced and lost their homes. Families have lost loved ones. Communities have been uprooted. Entire neighborhoods have been reduced to rubble. Across the region, innocent people are paying the price for decisions they did not make and conflicts they did not create.

As this violence rages on, it happens against the backdrop of a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, ongoing human rights violations in the West Bank, human suffering that has reached unimaginable levels. Children are facing hunger, displacement, and the constant threat of violence. Families are struggling to access food, clean water, medicine, and shelter.

In the West Bank, Palestinian families continue to face violence daily. A 7-month-old baby was shot and killed by a soldier just days ago in a car. Entire villages and sacred olive trees have been destroyed. There are restrictions on movement, indignities in everyday life, and unfathomable cruelty.

These impacts are not just felt in these communities but in our districts here at home, as their families and friends watch in horror and grief.

We have a fundamental, not only constitutional, responsibility as Congress to rein in these immoral and illegal wars but to stop these crimes.

Congress cannot stand by and let this continue. These illegal wars are not

only violations of our war powers, they are violations of the basic human rights of our people.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Ms. STANSBURY. So it is time to end these illegal wars.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Ms. STANSBURY. End the cruel and inhuman policies that are terrorizing our communities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman is no longer recognized.

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 43 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:

Our king and our God, Your throne endures forever. You rule with a scepter of equity. You love the right and despise the wrong.

Humbly, we come before You with the prayers of this body and of this Nation. You have blessed us richly, guiding the founding of this democracy with the enduring virtues of freedom and liberty, peace and justice. You have raised up leaders and citizens whose blood, sweat, and tears have watered our soil, bringing forth the fruits of Your planting.

Grant, we pray, Your continued blessing upon this land that we love, that America would reflect its noble heritage and the lessons learned from both the triumphs and failings of the past.

Give us each a renewed spirit of dependence on You and a deep thirst for Your direction, that we may preserve the blessings we have inherited and pass them faithfully to those who follow after us.

May peace and prosperity be our hope and Your abiding and steadfast love and salvation our reward.

In all generations, may Your name be celebrated, that all peoples may praise You forever and ever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.