

Force One, known as VC-25B bridge aircraft, from the possession of the U.S. Air Force.

As I have made clear today, after all the money and work invested in the retrofit of this practically brand-new Boeing 747, as well as the new \$45 million pilot training contract that the Air Force just announced, the country and the American taxpayer deserve to get its money's worth from this plane. At a time when so many Americans are struggling to make ends meet, that is not too much to ask.

Its service life will last for years. Just as the Air Force One plane that flew for over a decade after Ronald Reagan left office, this Air Force One should be used to benefit the Nation and not be used as a vanity project.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is about exercising congressional stewardship of property that belongs to the U.S. taxpayer, and it should be easy for every Member of this Chamber to support. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, it asserts what is both legally the right thing to do, but also morally the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me and Ranking Member SMITH to cosponsor this commonsense measure.

□ 1215

#### RECOGNIZING THE SUDANESE-AMERICAN IOWA NATIONAL SOCCER TEAM CLUB

(Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS of Iowa was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Sudanese-American Iowa National Soccer Team Club for its outstanding performance at the Sudanese American Soccer Federation's 25th Anniversary Tournament.

Competing at the national level for the third time, the Iowa team earned three awards that reflect the talent, character, and dedication of its players. The club received the Fair Play Award for its sportsmanship, discipline, teamwork, and respect throughout the tournament.

Olamilekan Ojo, known as Messi, was recognized with the Five-Star Outstanding Player Award for his exceptional performance, and the club also received a Tournament Participation Award. These accomplishments are a testament to the team's hard work and its commitment to representing Iowa with pride.

Beyond competition, the club uses soccer to develop young athletes, build leadership skills and character, promote healthy lifestyles, and strengthen community connections.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the coaches and all the young athletes on the Iowa National Soccer Team Club, and I look forward to seeing all that they accomplish in the future.

CELEBRATING NATIONAL TRUCK DRIVER  
APPRECIATION WEEK

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate National

Truck Driver Appreciation Week and recognize the hardworking men and women who keep Iowa and our Nation moving.

Iowa is home to 37,530 truck drivers, many of whom spend long hours on the road delivering the food, fuel, supplies, and products our families, farms, and businesses rely on every day.

From the truck stops along Interstate 80 to the world's largest truck stop, the Iowa 80 Truck Stop in Walcott, trucking is a vital part of Iowa's economy and way of life. These drivers help keep our grocery store shelves stocked, support Iowa's farmers and manufacturers, and ensure goods can reach communities across our State and country. They even deliver lifesaving medical supplies and organs.

In fact, more than 60 percent of the communities in Iowa depend exclusively on trucks to move their goods. The trucking industry also provides good-paying jobs for Iowans and supports thousands of locally owned businesses.

I am grateful for the dedication and sacrifice of Iowa's truck drivers and the vital role they play in supporting our families, strengthening our local businesses, and ensuring communities across Iowa have the goods and resources they need.

RECOGNIZING THE SEOL FAMILY

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a story about an unpayable debt, a promise kept across generations, and the true meaning of the American Dream.

Mr. Speaker, 75 years ago, a young refugee named Myung-Hee Seol, having survived a brutal foreign occupation and the shadow of communism, fought for his life in the Korean war. On a frozen, desolate hill, an American marine pulled him from the brink of death—igniting a spark of gratitude that would shape a family's destiny forever.

Decades later, his son, the international artist Kacey Seol, poured his heart into honoring that nameless marine. He created Alliance 70, a breathtaking 10-foot canvas composed of 300,000 microscopic historic images of both nations harmonizing into one powerful unit that now hangs permanently inside the Pentagon. It is a stunning, living monument to the alliance that bought his family's freedom.

Today, that sacred promise is fulfilled at Rock Island Arsenal in my district. The refugee's grandson, Dr. Jason Seol—serving dually as an U.S. Army Reserve officer and an Army civilian at First Army Headquarters—is living the American Dream his grandfather could only imagine. He also pioneered their innovative Holistic Health and Fitness, H2F, martial arts program, training our Nation's soldiers in physical and mental readiness.

As we continue celebrating 250 years of our Nation, the Seol family reminds us freedom is not free. You earn it daily by what you do for your family, your community, and your country. Their 75-year journey is the ultimate

testament that American freedom is a priceless gift that is meant to be paid forward and preserved.

Mr. Speaker, I wish a very happy birthday to my sister-in-law, Susan. Happy birthday, Susan.

Mr. Speaker, I wish a happy birthday to my husband, Curt Meeks. Happy birthday to my husband, and I hope he has many more birthdays to come.

#### COMMEMORATING THE 63RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE 16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH BOMBING

(Ms. SEWELL of Alabama was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 63rd anniversary of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and to honor the lives of four little girls whose lives were taken in one of the darkest chapters of our Nation's history.

On the morning of September 15, 1963, four young girls—Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Morris Wesley—were in the basement of the 16th Street Baptist Church preparing for Sunday school.

They were daughters. They were sisters. They were classmates and friends. They had their whole lives ahead of them.

Just before 11 o'clock that morning, 19 sticks of dynamite planted underneath the church by members of the Ku Klux Klan exploded. The blast tore through the church, and beneath the rubble were the bodies of four innocent little girls.

Sarah Collins Rudolph, Addie Mae Collins' sister, was also in the basement that morning. She survived the bomb but suffered severe injuries, including the loss of her right eye.

The tragedy did not end with the bomb exploding. As Black Alabamians took to the streets to demand justice, they were met with violence and brutality, resulting in the loss of two more children: 16-year-old Johnny Robertson and 13-year-old Virgil Ware.

For too long, their families were denied the justice that they deserved. It took more than three decades before the perpetrators of this heinous attack were finally brought to justice.

Six decades later, we must remember that these were not simply events in a history book. These were children whose lives were stolen because of the color of their skin.

While we can never undo the pain of that day, we can ensure that these precious lives are never ever forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, in 2013, I was honored to have my very first bill passed by Congress. That legislation awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to the four little girls. I will never forget standing in the Oval Office as President Barack Obama signed the bill into law on the 50th anniversary of the bombing.

It was a very personal moment for me because I know that those four little girls did not get the opportunity to

grow up and pursue their dreams. And yet, 63 years later, I had the extraordinary privilege of walking these Halls as Alabama's first Black Congresswoman. I never forgot that I am here because they are not.

Their sacrifice helped galvanize a movement that changed the course of our Nation. Their memory strengthens the resolve of the foot soldiers who march for justice. It helped inspire the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Their legacy brought America closer to living up to its promise of equality and justice for all.

But, Mr. Speaker, remembering those four little girls cannot simply be about looking backward. It must also be about what we do today because the freedoms that they died for are not guaranteed. Every generation has a responsibility to protect them and to advance it.

That is why we must teach our children the truth about our history. It is why we must never forget what happened on that day and that we must protect the sacred right to vote. It is why we must continue the fight for the equal justice and equal opportunity of every American. It is why, on this anniversary, we must recommit ourselves to the unfinished work of the civil rights movement.

Today, I ask my colleagues to pause and remember four precious children: Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Morris Wesley.

May we honor their memory not only with our words but with our actions, and may we forever remember that the freedoms we enjoy today come at a tremendous cost—costs that are borne by Americans. We must uphold their legacy, extend their legacy, and we must never ever forget.

#### REMEMBERING FATHER VINCENT ROBERT CAPODANNO

(Ms. MALLIOTAKIS of New York was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. MALLIOTAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell a story of one of Staten Island's most extraordinary sons, Father Vincent Robert Capodanno, who 59 years ago last week gave his life in Vietnam while serving as Navy chaplain.

His Medal of Honor citation tells us what he did in a moment of unimaginable danger. But to understand Father Capodanno, we must ask a deeper question: What kind of life prepares a man to walk willingly onto a battlefield under relentless fire unarmed because wounded men are coming for him?

The answer began long before Vietnam. His first mission took him to Taiwan, where he served the Hakka people. He learned their language so he could know them, understand them, and better serve them. He administered the sacraments, distributed food and

medicine, and cared for their spiritual and emotional needs. He worked with the youth, encouraging them throughout their scholastic challenges and achievements, some battling depression.

Service was not something he summoned in one heroic moment, but it was a pattern in his entire life. He carried that same conviction to Vietnam where he carried a cross, not a gun.

Father Capodanno refused to minister from a distance. He lived as the marines lived. He shared their brutal conditions because he believed he could not truly serve them without understanding their experience. He earned their trust and made their burdens his own. He prayed for them, and he comforted them.

On September 4, 1967, during Operation Swift, he crossed a battlefield under relentless fire to reach wounded marines. Wounded by a mortar blast, he refused treatment, directed the corpsmen to care for the other wounded, and continued his ministry. He was killed just inches from a wounded fellow American he was trying to save.

President Nixon posthumously awarded him the Medal of Honor in 1969, our Nation's highest military honor. Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago, in 2006, the Catholic Church gave him the title Servant of God, opening his path for sainthood.

Father Capodanno was a priest whose faith and dedication to others led him to make the ultimate sacrifice. His last act did not create the man we honor. It revealed him.

May his story inspire people from across our Nation and around the world.

#### HONORING SERGEANT MICHAEL SULSONA

Ms. MALLIOTAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Sergeant Michael Sulsona—a decorated United States marine, gifted playwright, and beloved advocate for his fellow Staten Island veterans—who passed away sadly last week.

Some people serve their country for a chapter of their lives. Mike Sulsona served his country for an entire life.

Mike joined the Marines as a teenager and served as a rifleman in Vietnam. On January 15, 1971, while walking point during an enemy ambush, he stepped on a land mine and lost both of his legs above the knee.

He returned home with a Purple Heart and Bronze Star to a country that did not always give Vietnam veterans the respect they had earned. Yet, Mike refused to let his injuries define his future.

He earned a master of fine arts in writing and became an accomplished playwright and screenwriter, receiving four national awards, including The Kennedy Center Award for playwrighting. He also appeared in the Academy Award-winning film "Born on the Fourth of July."

But his greatest legacy was helping others.

For more than four decades, Mike devoted himself to veterans suffering

from Agent Orange exposure and post-traumatic stress, as well as homeless veterans, amputees, and burn victims. He helped them with their paperwork. He made phone calls on their behalf. He answered their call whenever they needed him, day or night.

Mike also fought tirelessly to have fellow Marine Sergeant Angel Mendez' Navy Cross upgraded to the Medal of Honor, an effort we were proud to work alongside him on and will continue on his behalf.

Mike once said: I put my name on the dotted line to be my brother's keeper.

That is exactly how he lived. He turned pain into purpose and a lifetime of service.

My prayers are with his sons, Vincent and Philip; his grandchildren, Lucas and Madison; and all who loved him. I also remember his wife, Frieda, his partner in life and service, who passed away just months before him.

Mr. Speaker, our community and country will never forget him. Semper Fidelis.

□ 1230

#### HONORING MICHAEL FIGURES

(Mr. FIGURES of Alabama was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. FIGURES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the anniversary of the most defining day of my life to date, September 13, 1996, a fall afternoon.

My mother walked into a waiting room at the University of South Alabama's medical center and announced to a collection of friends, family, and colleagues that my father, Michael Figures, had died. He had suffered a brain aneurysm at the house at the dinner table a couple of nights before and ultimately passed away.

Mr. Speaker, my father was a lot of things to a lot of people. He was a State senator. He was a civil rights advocate. He was a lawyer and a community leader. To me, he was just Daddy.

By any assessment, he exceeded expectations of a Black kid born in 1947 in Mobile, Alabama, in a neighborhood called The Bottle.

He went on to excel academically, went to Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, and was one of a handful of students who were selected to integrate the University of Alabama Law School, and he did that.

Mr. Speaker, 3 years later, he walked out as the first African American to graduate from the University of Alabama Law School.

He didn't stop there. He got elected to the State senate. Because of the Voting Rights Act, he was one of the first three African Americans to walk into that chamber since Reconstruction.

He used that position, as well as being a lawyer, to continue to advocate for rights and to continue to advocate for equality and fairness in communities. You can imagine that Alabama,