

be able to take care of the sick. The rudimentary elements of a civil society start there. And then to engage civil society within Iraq to begin to perform some of their own functions and to also ask the beginnings of Iraq's natural resources to go for the purposes of helping Iraq rebuild itself. I think the American people have the right to know how long are we going to continue to be there? How many more lives will we lose? How much will it cost? And, as I always listen to our colleagues here in the House and in committee, what is our exit strategy? What is our exit strategy?

Mr. DELAHUNT. We do not seem to be hearing that anymore.

Mr. MENENDEZ. No, we do not hear about exit strategies or nation building anymore.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Or lockboxes, either, for that matter. As the both of you were talking about the men and women that really made us all proud, and we consider our very best, I think it is important to state unequivocally that when they return, it is not simply about parades, it is about respecting them and delivering the promise and the commitment to veterans that I know each and every member of our party is willing to make. No cuts in veterans' benefits. None at all. That is unacceptable and would be unconscionable.

But let me end my digression and go back to the issue of nation building and just read a paragraph from the May 19 Washington Post. It is entitled "Plan to Secure Postwar Iraq Faulted." The author writes the following paragraph:

"In interviews here and in Washington and in testimony on Capitol Hill, military officers, other administration officials, and defense experts said the Pentagon ignored lessons from a decade of peacekeeping operations in Haiti, Somalia, the Balkans and Afghanistan."

Let us be candid and let the American people hear this: that in Afghanistan, we are at great risk of returning to that kind of chaos, that kind of volatility, instability that occurred prior to our invasion of Afghanistan. It is a mess in Afghanistan. The President of that country, President Karzai, cannot leave Kabul. The rest of that nation and many sections of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan are rife with Taliban and with other terrorist groups. And we have failed miserably in reconstruction efforts there. I would hope that this administration and this House would look to Afghanistan as an example of what not to do and go forward with a sensible plan that we can all support, because we know our responsibility.

Mr. HOFFFEL. Would the gentleman agree that using NATO as a peacekeeping force might be the right thing to do in both Afghanistan and Iraq?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think what is rather ironic, of course, is in Afghanistan, our NATO ally Germany is play-

ing a key and vital role. Afghanistan militarily was truly a coalition of the willing, not a coalition of the coerced, the bribed, but a coalition of the willing. But I think it is important that we approach the reconstruction of both Afghanistan and Iraq on a multilateral basis. We cannot ask the American people to continue to bear the full burden. We have already made a comment in Iraq which practically guarantees a new hospital in every Iraqi city, 100 percent maternity coverage for Iraqi women that is going to be funded by the taxpayers of the United States. And what are we doing here in this Congress under this Republican leadership to Medicare? We are cutting it by \$95 billion. That is not fair to the American taxpayer. It is not fair to the American people.

Mr. HOFFFEL. I thank the gentleman for his comments, for his leadership in the House and his eloquence on the House Committee on International Relations.

Would my friend from New Jersey like to make some final remarks as our time is short?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Very briefly, I appreciate the gentleman's engaging in the dialogue, and I hope we will continue it in the future. I think we owe America's young men and women who went into harm's way, that before we call upon them again for a preemptive strike, that we are doing so based upon sound information, that we are based on intelligence that is honest, truthful and transparent, that we ultimately have a plan not only to win the war but to win the peace, because we are losing soldiers every day. It is not as well publicized, but we are losing soldiers every day. We deserve, before we send the finest to answer the Nation's call, and that is where the congressional responsibility takes place, in asking these questions, in getting answers and being able to prepare for the future.

Mr. HOFFFEL. I thank my colleagues for joining me.

CORRECTION TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2003, AT PAGES H 5036-H 5037

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE MEXICO-UNITED STATES INTERPARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PORTER). Pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276h and the order of the House of January 8, 2003, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the Mexico-United States Interparliamentary Group, in addition to Mr. KOLBE of Arizona, Chairman, appointed on March 13, 2003:

Mr. BALLENGER of North Carolina, Vice Chairman,
Mr. DREIER of California,
Mr. BARTON of Texas,
Mr. MANZULLO of Illinois,
Mr. WELLER of Illinois,

Ms. HARRIS of Florida,
Mr. STENHOLM of Texas,
Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA of American Samoa,
Mr. PASTOR of Arizona,
Mr. FILNER of California, and
Mr. REYES of Texas.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BAIRD (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of an event in the district.

Mr. BECERRA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Ms. KILPATRICK (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and June 10 on account of a family illness.

Mr. REYES (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. SMITH of Washington (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of personal reasons.

Mr. HOUGHTON (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and June 10 on account of family matters.

Mr. TOOMEY (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of official business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:

Ms. PELOSI, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KIND, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. SOLIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCDERMOTT, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

The following Members (at the request of Mr. GUTKNECHT) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and June 10.

Mr. GUTKNECHT, for 5 minutes, today and June 10, 11, and 12.

(The following Members (at their own request) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. RODRIGUEZ, for 5 minutes, today.