

*Resolved,* That the Committee on Foreign Relations expresses to Ambassador Low deep appreciation for his service to the Department of State and the United States of America.●

#### SERGEANT AARON HENEHAN

● Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, During this holiday season, I would like to recognize the soldiers and veterans from Alaska who have given so much and continue to give so much. I would like them to know that their sacrifices in Afghanistan and Iraq have not gone unnoticed by their fellow Alaskans. When I was in Iraq I had the pleasure of meeting soldiers and National Guardsmen from Anchorage, Fairbanks, Seward, Soldotna, Eagle River, Slana, and Wasilla. Hearing their stories and commitment made me incredibly proud to be an Alaskan.

Every day, Alaskans write my office praising the service men and women who have returned and those still in combat. Sometimes it is just a short message conveying their support, while other times is a long heartfelt letter praising our heroes and expressing solidarity with them for the sacrifices they have made. I truly believe that the fact that Alaska has the largest number of veterans per capita says a lot about our State's character.

Alaskan veterans are some of the most exemplary in the Armed Forces. The 172nd Stryker Brigade in particular had their tour in Iraq extended to 16 months, but when their country asked them for more they remained strong and proud. Just last week I received an e-mail from the commander of the 172nd. He informed me that on December 12 Sgt. Gregory Williams from the 172nd was presented the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest award for valor, for his actions in combat while in Baghdad. Despite being injured himself when their vehicle was struck by a bomb, Sergeant Williams was able to return fire and help a wounded comrade to safety. To date, there have been only eight Distinguished Service Crosses awarded since the war began in 2001.

We Alaskans often enjoy doing things our own way. In Iraq, one Alaskan marine discovered he had hidden talents he never imagined when his innovative approach to searching out insurgents earned him the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal. SGT Aaron A. Henehan led his squad to search out and detain 18 "blacklist" or high-value insurgents while on his third tour in Iraq.

An adventurous young man, Sergeant Henehan was barely out of high school and anxious to see the world when he first thought of signing up to serve his country. September 11 and the outbreak of war did not cause his decision to waiver an inch.

Sergeant Henehan deployed in April of 2003 and spent his first tour in the town of Babylon in Najaf Province. He served his country well, like many who

fought alongside him, and began to learn the undercurrents and inner workings of Iraqi society. He returned for a second tour to Husaybah, near Iraq's border with Syria in August 2004. At the time Husaybah was a dangerous town.

Sergeant Henehan served his second tour in Iraq with distinction again but still felt he needed to do more. Before deploying for his third and final tour in February of 2006 he told friends and family back home that he yearned to make a difference in Iraq, a sentiment many American soldiers and guardsmen share with him. He spent a lot of time between his second and third tours thinking about what he could do differently, how he could learn from his experience and achieve a better result.

Combining his marine training with information he learned from a retired LAPD officer deployed to Iraq to teach our troops urban tactics, Sergeant Henehan approached his third tour with what he referred to as a "beat cop mentality." He wanted to approach the problem of rounding up insurgents as if he were a native of the area. He spent his free time studying the tribal history and geography of Husaybah for hours at a time.

The ability to put his plan in motion, Sergeant Henehan says, was made possible in part by Operation Steel Curtain, which had cleared Husaybah block by block, and set up outposts called "firm bases" throughout the city. Upon returning for his third tour, Sergeant Henehan immediately noticed that after this push, while not always willing to openly support the coalition forces, many Iraqis felt safe enough to give him tips on where the insurgents were hiding. This change in mentality, coupled with Sergeant Henehan's knowledge of family and tribal connections, allowed him to determine which people to ask about each of the 18 high value insurgents he located. He knew exactly who would be willing to tip him off about a social rival or historic foe.

Traveling with an interpreter, Sergeant Henehan had a talent for remembering names and personal details. He took every opportunity he could to talk with the locals and learn about the town's social organization and tribal boundaries, often returning several times to talk with the same families to gain their trust. Bringing with him candy, doctors, and his good humor, he would knock on doors and politely ask to chat. Entire families opened up to him. Sometimes it would start with a toy given to a child; sometimes it was a heartfelt conversation with a shopkeeper. The response he got astonished everyone, including the insurgents hiding out in the town.

The 12 marines in his squad called him a fair, but tough leader who they felt very safe with. His intense and proactive preparation for the more than 80 combat missions which he led and his personal attention to each of his 12 soldiers' well-being gave them a

sense of security. They too noted how his relaxed Alaskan exterior quickly helped earn him the respect of the townspeople.

Even more remarkably, Sergeant Henehan's reputation for being fair and caring allowed him to detain all 18 high-value insurgents without any real violence. These 18 also led him to their associates, significantly disrupting insurgent operations in that part of Al Anbar Province. Sergeant Henehan remained behind after his unit returned to the States to train new troops about how he learned to wage urban warfare while gaining the trust of the townspeople. The downturn in violence in Al Anbar can be linked, in part, to his efforts and efforts of those like him.

Sergeant Henehan is currently attending a California community college and plans to transfer to a larger State school after completing his distribution credits. He wants to major in computer programs and even talks of one day creating video games that more accurately portray what war in the modern era is like. He has already begun organizing photographs from his three tours to use as backdrops. Clearly his talent for careful planning and his desire to share his knowledge and experiences with others did not leave with his donning of civilian clothes. I wish him the best in all his future endeavors, just as I wish the best for all of our Alaskan veterans and those now serving.●

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. DOUGLAS C. PATTERSON

● Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, today I commend a distinguished resident of the State of Alabama, Dr. Douglas C. Patterson on the occasion of his retirement from Troy University. Upon receiving his bachelor's degree from Alabama College in 1967, Patterson was commissioned a lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps and served as a platoon commander for a Combat Engineer Platoon and as an intelligence officer for the First Engineer Battalion of the First Marine Division in the Republic of Vietnam.

Upon returning from Vietnam, Patterson received his masters from the University of Montevallo and his doctorate from the University of Alabama. Dr. Patterson's experience includes serving as a high school counselor, director of Counseling and Career Services at Jefferson State Junior College, vice president for instruction at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind and currently, he serves as the senior vice chancellor for administration for Troy University.

Dr. Patterson has served Troy University with great honor and distinction as a senior administrator since 1989 and has provided exemplary service to the university and to the citizens of the State of Alabama. During his tenure as senior vice chancellor for administration, Dr. Patterson directed