

is probably closer to 15 percent. So the figures we are getting from the administration are really not that accurate.

It's extremely important that the administration, and my Democrat colleagues here in the House and especially in the Senate, take a hard look at where we're going. The projections are over the next 10 years we're going to increase the deficit by at least \$1 trillion a year. We cannot afford that. This country will go completely bankrupt. You'll see inflation that you won't believe.

Right now the Fed is printing money to cover the expenditures that we're incurring day after day after day. That money they're using, they're buying bonds with it, Treasury bonds. So that money is not actually being seen in circulation. But the fact is that we're increasing the debt by printing money at the Fed on a daily basis. In Europe, the European Central Bank is doing the same thing with the euro. This country and the rest of the world is heading toward an inflationary problem that's going to be unbelievable.

Now, people say in this country right now we haven't seen any inflation. If you look at the figures that are coming out from the administration, inflation last year went up about 1 to 2 percent, but they're including in that figure all the new technologies that are taking place. They're not going to the grocery store.

I went to the grocery store last week and bought four apples at a cost of almost \$5. Three tomatoes cost almost \$5. If you go to the gas pump today—and my colleague from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) talked about that just a few minutes ago. If you go to the gas pump today, it's almost \$4 for a gallon of gas. So the inflation rate on staples, on things that we use on a daily basis is probably well over 10 percent, maybe even higher than that.

We don't know, but the administration says it's only 1 to 2 percent. Talk to the wives and husbands of people that are really strapped for cash right now, and you will find that it's costing them a great deal more than that on a daily basis for gasoline, food, clothes, and everything else.

It's extremely important that we get control of spending. This is not the time to raise taxes. The President has said that himself, especially back in 2008 and 2009. Yet now they are taking a different tack and saying we need to raise taxes.

□ 1200

That would be like throwing gasoline on a fire. We should not be raising taxes. We should be addressing the spending side of the ledger; and if we do that, we will get this country back on the right track.

I just got back from Europe. I took a codel over there to Brussels to meet with the finance people in the European Union to find out where they are heading, and they're heading in a very difficult direction right now. If Greece

goes belly up, it's very likely that you're going to see other countries go belly up. And we have investments in money market funds and bonds that we've purchased in those countries. And if those countries default, it's going to affect the United States as well. So we need to get our house in order so that we don't end up in the same bailiwick that Europe is in right now that could cause severe economic problems in this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll end by saying it's important to get control of spending. This is not the time to raise taxes. A poll was taken recently by the Politico magazine here on Capitol Hill, and 75 percent of the people in this country that were polled said not to raise taxes. So the people get it. I just hope that the White House will.

The United States still finds itself in a spending driven debt crisis.

The National Debt has now surpassed an unprecedented \$15 trillion dollars.

House Republicans approved a budget that would have put a stop to spending money that we don't have as well as cutting \$6.2 Trillion Dollars more than the President's budget. The Democrats blocked it.

The U.S. debt-to-GDP ratio is now officially over 100 percent (approx. 110 percent at the end of 2011).

To put the severity of this crisis into perspective, it took from the presidencies of George Washington to Bill Clinton to amass the same amount of debt that President Obama has racked up in the past 32 months.

The President's solution to the burgeoning problem his Administration's reckless behavior has caused? Increase Taxes.

The Problem, according to the President is simply that the most successful among us simply aren't paying their fair share . . .

This sentiment has most recently manifested itself in the President's proposed budget, in which he has increased taxes to the tune of \$1.5 Trillion Dollars.

The simple reality of the situation is that this is nothing more than campaign rhetoric, employed in hopes of fomenting class warfare and dividing the American people.

"You cannot tax your way into prosperity."

We learned this after the 1929 stock market crash when Herbert Hoover, a Republican, signed legislation to sharply increase taxes on businesses, who were seen as the catalyst for the market crash.

Hoover's draconian tax increases, fueled by a similar populist outcry heard today, ultimately served as the first salvo in a series of policy missteps that would ultimately lead to the Great Depression of the 1930's.

Keep In Mind That:

Even if Congress imposed a 100 percent tax, taking all earnings above \$250,000 per year, it would yield \$1.4 Trillion Dollars. That would keep the government running for 141 days.

The problem is there are 224 more days left in the year.

If we gave the \$400 Billion Dollars of profits reaped by the Fortune 500 the 100 percent tax treatment . . . We Could fund the Government for another 40 days.

It was not too long ago that President Obama himself was quoted as saying, "You do not raise taxes during a recession."

If only he had the resolve to heed his own advice.

The American people also believe that the course of action taken by Hoover and endorsed by Obama is not the right way forward.

In a recent poll in The Hill Newspaper, 75 percent of American's polled felt that, the "most appropriate top tax rate for families earning \$250,000 or more" is 30 percent or less. This would be 5 percent less than what this income group currently pays.

This is in stark contrast to the 40 percent tax rate that Obama and like-minded Democrats in the Congress have called for to enact in 2013.

When one couples this with the expiration of the Bush Tax Cuts . . . We are creating an environment where the entire tax code as we know it will cease to exist.

If we continue in this vein, in 2013:

The 8 out of 10 businesses in America that file taxes as individuals will see their tax rate go to 44.8 percent.

This will effectively kill what little growth our embattled economy has left.

Despite the top marginal tax rate varying between 35 percent and 91 percent since 1960, Federal tax collections have been between 15 and 20 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product every year since 1960.

From this we can infer whether taxes are high or low, people make adjustments in their economic behavior so as to keep the government tax take at 15 to 20 percent of the GDP.

History has proven unequivocally that tax rates have always had a greater impact on economic growth than they do on Federal revenues.

It is no longer good enough to kick the can down the road and make this the next Congresses' or next President's problem.

Unless we wish to bring the problems of Europe to our shores it is incumbent on us to champion responsible spending restraint; a repaired safety net; reforms that ensure real health and retirement security; and a simplified tax code oriented toward economic growth.

I yield back the balance of my time.

AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES KILLING AMERICAN SERVICE MEMBERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, just today we heard reports that two more American servicemembers in Afghanistan were gunned down by the very security forces they are helping to train. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. Last week, two Army officers were gunned down inside the Afghan Interior Ministry. Attacks by Afghan soldiers and security forces have accounted for nearly 70 deaths since 2007.

The U.S. military did a report on this phenomenon, referred to as "Green on Blue" attacks, and determined that they are turning into a "growing systemic threat" to our military personnel in the region. These are not U.S. deaths from combat with Taliban and other insurgent groups, although some

of the perpetrators likely hold Taliban sympathies. These attacks are by the very forces our military is trying to train to take control of their own country—a significant component of the Obama administration's military draw-down strategy.

What are American forces to do when they doubt whether they can trust those who wear the uniform of an ally we are spending blood and treasure supporting? These attacks further complicate U.S. strategy.

Mr. Speaker, Congress and the Obama administration need to realize that these things are not going well in Afghanistan, and it has nothing to do with the capabilities of our troops. Not only are Afghan security forces gunning down their American advisers, terrorist and insurgent groups continue to find sanctuary in the tribal wilderness areas of Pakistan.

In January, the most recent National Intelligence Estimate painted a very bleak picture of the war in Afghanistan and the future of U.S. operations in the region. It reflects concerns that I've expressed numerous times to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, especially the importance of understanding Afghan tribal structures and the Pakistani military and intelligence services actively cooperating with two of the mostly deadly terror networks in the region.

Last week, The Washington Post reported that U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker wrote a cable describing the fragile situation in the region. The cable described many of the problems in the region, including terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan where militants continue training to attack U.S. forces. Ryan Crocker has a tremendous history in that region, having been Ambassador to Iraq, and also Ambassador to Pakistan.

Secretary Panetta has stated that U.S. forces are "working hard with Pakistan to improve the level of cooperation" so that terrorist groups no longer find safe haven in the country.

While I appreciate the hard work being done by our forces in the region, I'm afraid that the complexity of the evolving situation may necessitate that we take a very close examination of how we're operating.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have the answers to these extremely complicated and dangerous challenges; but last year Congress gave the Obama administration the ability to create an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group, an independent panel of five Democrats and five Republicans who love their country more than they love their political party. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group would put their expertise to work and offer constructive recommendations to the administration to achieve our mission and to be successful in Afghanistan.

This panel would be modeled after the Iraq Study Group, which was convened during the worst violence in Iraq. The panel was formed only after 3

years of fighting in that country. It was called the Baker-Hamilton Commission. With the Iraq Study Group, it was an amendment that I offered, and I think it made a constructive difference. It was five Republicans and five Democrats. Secretary Gates served on the commission. Secretary Panetta served on the commission, Ed Meese. Fine people, distinguished people, people of integrity and good judgment; and they came up with some good recommendations. I have urged Secretary Panetta repeatedly to embrace this tried and tested model, this time for the Nation's longest war. Five Republicans, five Democrats, all people who are no longer involved in the political process but have understanding and knowledge both from a diplomatic and a military point of that region, both with Afghanistan and with Pakistan.

U.S. forces have been on the ground in Afghanistan for over 10 years now, and it is clear that things are not going well. Given the challenges I have discussed, I find it difficult to understand why Secretary Panetta and President Obama refuse to use the authority it has right now to establish the Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group. Such a group already has the support of Congress. This bill passed the United States Congress, and I ask what harm can come from a group of independent experts looking at our missions with fresh eyes, fresh eyes on the target. Secretary Panetta and the administration gets to select the group, the five Republicans and five Democrats, so those who serve on this study will be selected by the administration, and particularly by Secretary Panetta, who I have great respect for.

It's hard for me to understand why Secretary Panetta was willing to sit on the Iraq Study Group, which was going to evaluate a war that had gone on for 3½ years under a Republican administration, but is not willing to do the same thing to have an outside group look at a war that has now been going on for over 10 years.

This would be totally bipartisan. It would be objective. It would be fresh eyes on the target. Ryan Crocker before he was appointed Ambassador to Afghanistan supported this concept, and many very patriotic Americans have, with the idea of how can we be successful in Afghanistan and also in Pakistan.

I do not know what the recommendations of the panel would be. Maybe they will examine the current policy and determine that it is the best possible way to achieve success; but the fact remains that Congress provided the resources and the authority for the Obama administration to conduct an independent review, and they are refusing as of this moment to take action.

Again, it was interesting during the Iraq war, Secretary Rumsfeld was willing to have the Iraq Study Group go forward. General Peter Pace, who was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was willing to have the Iraq

Study Group go forward. Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, was willing to have the Iraq Study Group go forward. Mr. Steve Hadley, the National Security Adviser, was willing to have the Iraq Study Group go forward. They picked two outstanding Americans—probably could not have had finer people—former Secretary of State Jim Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, who was co-chairman of the 9/11 Commission, was chairman of the Intelligence Committee, and has done a lot of very good things. It was a bipartisan effort.

Again, we had people like Secretary Gates, and we had Attorney General Meese; and they came together with a very constructive proposal. And as many Members may remember, the surge was in the Iraq Study Group. It was on page 73.

So why would Secretary Panetta, who was willing to judge activities for a war gone on for 3½ years during the Bush administration, not be willing to have 10 objective people that he proposes, not that the Congress proposes, not that any partisan group proposes, but that he would propose to bring fresh eyes on the target, to look to see how we can deal with the issue in Afghanistan and Pakistan and do it in a way to make sure that we are doing everything we can to protect the men and women who are serving so honorably and so well our Nation?

□ 1210

I believe also, Mr. Speaker, that it's a moral issue, too. I believe we owe this—we owe this to the men and women who are serving, and we also owe it to the families.

If other Members care, I would ask you to look at the language and then also write a letter to Leon Panetta. Leon Panetta is a good man. I served with him here in the House. He loves his country, and I think he is working very, very hard. The people serving in the military at the Pentagon are very committed and very capable people, but like anything else, sometimes a fresh approach, or fresh eyes, again, I think would be very good for our country and something that we owe to the men and women who are serving in the military and to their families.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
July 19, 2011.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: I write today concerning the U.S. mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan. My amendment, which gives the secretary of Defense the authority to establish an Afghanistan/Pakistan (Af/Pak) Study Group, was included in the House-passed FY 2012 Defense Appropriations bill. I pressed for the amendment because I believe fresh eyes are needed now to examine the situation on the ground and the overall U.S. mission.

I envision the Af/Pak Study Group being modeled after the Iraq Study Group (ISG). Both you and your predecessor Bob Gates served on the ISG and know better than

most the benefits it provided after three years of fighting in Iraq. Now that the U.S. is in its 10th year in Afghanistan, I believe a similar effort is necessary.

Before he was appointed as ambassador to Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker supported creating an Af/Pak Study Group, along with Ambassador Ronald Neumann and Jim Dobbins from the RAND Corporation. American men and women are fighting and dying in Afghanistan. If we are asking them to put their lives on the line daily, I believe we have an obligation to provide an independent evaluation of the U.S. mission. We owe our military forces nothing less.

I do not have the answers. But as you know, there is a movement building in Congress in favor of pulling troops out of Afghanistan. An amendment offered by Rep. Jim McGovern earlier this year to the National Defense Authorization Act to accelerate U.S. departure from Afghanistan was narrowly defeated 204–215. If six members had changed their vote, the amendment would have passed. I have talked to several members who voted against the McGovern amendment who are seriously concerned about the war in Afghanistan and could change their vote if the situation on the ground does not improve rapidly.

I also believe it is critical that Afghanistan be examined in tandem with the facts on the ground in Pakistan. It is clear that in order to be successful in Afghanistan, we must have a clear understanding of how Pakistan is influencing U.S. operations. Just look at the recent news from the region. Hamid Karzai's half-brother was murdered and his funeral bombed, Karzai advisor Jan Mohammed Kahn was murdered, and militants attacked and laid siege to the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. The enclosed article printed recently in the Washington Post states, “. . . optimism and energy vanished long ago, gradually replaced by cynicism and fear. The trappings of democracy remained in place . . . but the politics of ethnic dog fights, tribal feuds and personal patronage continued to prevail.”

The men and women serving in Afghanistan deserve to have fresh eyes look at this region as soon as possible. With House passage of the Af/Pak amendment, I ask that you use your authority as secretary and move quickly to create this study group. I have discussed my amendment with John Hamre at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and he has offered to coordinate the group with professionals with a wide range of expertise.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this important initiative and look forward to working with you to ensure we are successful in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
August 1, 2011.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
*Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: I want to follow up on my previous letter regarding Afghanistan policy and bring to your attention a book I am reading, *The Wars in Afghanistan*, discussed in the enclosed Washington Post book review. Its author, Ambassador Peter Tomsen, is a veteran of the Foreign Service and has an impressive background in the South Asia region. If you have not read his book, I highly recommend it to you. The Post review concludes: “This long overdue work . . . is the most authoritative account

yet of Afghanistan's wars over the last 30 years and should be essential reading for those wishing to forge a way forward without repeating the mistakes of the past.”

After three years of the Iraq war, the formation of the Iraq Study Group garnered the support of Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Rice, and Joint Chiefs General Pace. Our military men and women have been putting their lives on the line in Afghanistan every day for 10 years, seven years longer than when the decision was made to create the ISG to provide the independent assessment needed for U.S. policy in Iraq. I believe we owe it to our brave soldiers to focus now with fresh eyes on the target in Afghanistan.

I have spoken with Ambassador Tomsen about a framework for moving forward in Afghanistan, and he would be happy to meet with you and your team to discuss his breadth of experience there. I urge you to take him up on his offer.

Best wishes,

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
September 15, 2011.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
*Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense,
The Pentagon, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: It was good to be with you at the Pentagon on Sunday to honor the lives lost there 10 years ago in the 9/11 attacks. I want to congratulate you on a moving ceremony that showed reverence to the Pentagon employees and the passengers of American Flight 77 that perished on that awful morning. I appreciated your comments and those of Admiral Mullen. Several of my constituents died at the Pentagon and the first U.S. service member killed in Afghanistan was my constituent. I thank you and all those who have served in public office and in uniform in the 10 years we have waged war against global terrorism.

As I waited for the program to begin on Sunday, I saw you and former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and was struck by a vivid memory from 2005 of the events surrounding the Iraq war. We were three years into the war, the security situation in Iraq was deteriorating, and our soldiers were dying every day. As a member of Congress who voted to send our troops to fight, I believed I had the added responsibility to make sure the administration was receiving the best advice possible on our Iraq strategy.

So I proposed creating the Iraq Study Group (ISG) made up of experts outside government to bring what I called “fresh eyes” on the target. Secretary Rumsfeld, General Pace, Secretary Rice, and NSC Chairman Hadley all came to see the value in the ISG. By your participation, I think it is fair to say you also saw its benefit, and I greatly appreciated your outstanding service on the bipartisan panel. You and the other Democratic members who gave your time during a Republican administration exemplified the true meaning of service to your country.

We are now into the 10th year of fighting in Afghanistan and the challenges we face there continue. In 2001, I was the first member of Congress, along with Rep. Joe Pitts, to visit Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion, against the wishes of the Defense Department. We saw firsthand the devastation that the Taliban had visited on Kabul as well as the remnants of the U.S. Embassy that was abandoned in 1979. I have also traveled to Pakistan and seen the difficulties that country faces combating the Afghan Taliban and other terror groups. Despite the current conditions, all my experience in this region tells me that success is possible if we formulate

the right strategy to deal with both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As with the ISG, I believe fresh eyes are needed now to examine U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The security situation continues to erode as evidenced by coordinated insurgent attacks on heavily fortified U.S. and NATO compounds just this week. The Taliban still finds safe haven in the tribal wilderness of Pakistan and the ISI actively funds terrorist groups.

Given these and other concerns on the ground in Afghanistan, I continue to be puzzled why you, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary Clinton are not supporting the Af/Pak Study Group idea in the same manner that Secretary Rumsfeld and other Bush administration officials supported the ISG. Having the experience of serving on the ISG and now serving as secretary of Defense with a Democratic president (who I acknowledge inherited the war in Afghanistan), you are in a unique position to make this group a reality. The authorization and funding for the Af/Pak Study Group in the House-passed Defense Appropriations bill gives you the authority to create this group today.

I have to tell you that I continue to be disappointed that your staff has yet to contact former Ambassador Peter Tomsen to discuss his book, *The Wars of Afghanistan*. His book provides insightful information on the tribal structure of both Afghanistan and Pakistan and the political allegiances that underlie all actions in the region. I believe his knowledge and experience in this region would be invaluable in formatting future policy in South Asia. I respectfully ask again: please take advantage of his work and meet with him as soon as possible.

Leon, I don't have the answers on Afghanistan. Perhaps current U.S. strategy is the best way forward. But we owe it to the men and women in uniform who have served and continue to serve there—some paying the ultimate sacrifice—to know definitively. I continue to believe that fresh eyes from outside government focused on assessing the situation is the prudent action to take. I ask that you take the advice of those who support an Af/Pak Study Group, including Jim Dobbins, General Charles Krulak, Ryan Crocker, who I spoke with prior to his appointment as ambassador to Afghanistan, and other prominent Americans with experience in this region.

I believe it would be a sign of strength to appoint a study group and let the American people know that the administration is willing to examine all possible policies to achieve a successful outcome in this troubled region.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
January 17, 2012.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
*Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: As I am sure you are aware, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 contains language providing your office with \$1 million to assemble the Afghanistan/Pakistan (Af/Pak) Study Group. I request that you do so immediately.

The Los Angeles Times reported last week (article enclosed) that the most recent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) paints a very bleak picture of the war in Afghanistan and the future of U.S. operations in that region. It reflects concerns that I have expressed in numerous letters to you over

time, especially the importance of understanding Afghan tribal and political structures and the Pakistani military and intelligence services actively cooperating with two of the most deadly terror networks in the region.

Given this stark assessment from our own intelligence community, the need to create the Af/Pak Study Group is clear. The Af/Pak Study Group's analysis and recommendations could bring needed clarity to current and future U.S. military and diplomatic operations. You supported the Iraq Study Group and lent your considerable expertise to that effort, so I am perplexed as to why you do not similarly support the Af/Pak Study Group.

Your November 3, 2011, letter to me stated that coalition troops are making progress against the Taliban and other militants and that progress is being made on our relationship with the Pakistani government and military. I have enormous respect for them and women serving our country in South Asia and acknowledge that our troops are performing their mission with bravery and resolve, however, the NIE appears to contradict your assessment.

Also enclosed is an article by the Hudson Institute's Nina Shea that discusses how Hussain Haqqani, the former Pakistani Ambassador to the United States is facing possible charges of treason for his alleged involvement in "Memogate." Shea asserts, "There is every reason to believe that the real reason Haqqani is being targeted is that he is a prominent moderate Muslim, one of the few remaining in Pakistan's government." Shea goes on to point out that Haqqani was personal friends with two men, Punjab governor Salman Taseer and Pakistan's Federal Minister of Minority Affairs Shabbaz Bhatti, whose lives were cut tragically short last year as a result of their outspoken critique of Pakistan's draconian blasphemy laws.

Increasingly we see a trend in Pakistan of moderating voices being marginalized and altogether silenced. While I appreciate that you are "working hard with Pakistan to improve the level of cooperation" so that terrorist and militant groups no longer find safe haven in the country—I am afraid the complexity of the evolving situation in Pakistan necessitates more.

The NIE's assessment could lead to support for the war in Afghanistan eroding among the American people and I feel the same sentiment will soon permeate the halls of Congress. If the president has simply decided that U.S. involvement will end in 2014 and that no further U.S. strategy is needed, he should clearly state that this is his policy and be forthcoming with the American people. If President Obama has not made a final determination on U.S. strategy going forward, I ask again, what harm can come from a group of independent experts using their experience to offer solutions for long-term success?

Following 9/11, I have supported U.S. military actions in the War on Terror. I want to see our soldiers, diplomats and Foreign Service personnel return home with their heads held high, knowing they all played a crucial role in establishing stability in South Asia where countries no longer pose a threat to our national security. I firmly believe that you can help ensure this happens by using the money made available to you to create the Af/Pak Study Group. Establishing this panel quickly will show the American people that the Obama Administration is willing to consider all possible options to achieve success in this volatile region.

I urge you to take these steps immediately before support for our mission in Afghanistan further erodes.

Best wishes.
Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
February 10, 2012.

HON. LEON PANETTA,
Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: I am sure you are aware of the enclosed article by Army Lt. Col. Daniel Davis that recently appeared in the Armed Forces Journal regarding the status of our mission in Afghanistan and the capabilities of Afghan National Army (ANA) forces. I am deeply troubled by the conclusions reached in Col. Davis' assessment and believe that it further underscores the importance of immediately creating the Afghanistan/Pakistan Study Group.

Col. Davis' piece tracks closely with the latest National Intelligence Estimate's assessment of current and future conditions in the region which I referenced in my January 17 letter to you (enclosed). These two assessments, coupled with the February 4 United Nations report showing that Afghan civilian casualties are increasing and the 2011 Red Team study by NATO on fratricide by ANA forces on coalition troops, lend credibility to the growing belief that U.S. strategy in South Asia is not going well.

In the interest of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines serving—and in many cases dying—in Afghanistan, I implore you to immediately establish the Afghanistan/Pakistan Study Group. As I have referenced in previous letters to you, Congress has provided the funding for this panel and under the law, you can select its members.

While reasonable people can disagree on specific policy options, I find it difficult to understand why the Obama Administration would not embrace a panel of five Democrats and five Republicans (modeled on the Iraq Study Group on which you and former Secretary Gates served), who love their country more than their party, putting their expertise to work and offering constructive recommendations to achieve our mission.

We owe it to the men and women serving in uniform—and the families supporting them—to have the best possible long-term strategy for success.

Best wishes.
Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

P.S. I know you care deeply about our service members serving overseas and that you and your team are doing what you think is best for our country. But I believe any objective observer would agree we need fresh eyes on the target.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE ADMINISTRATION IS NEGOTIATING WITH MURDERERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, there's so much going on in this country. There are so many great folks and some that are not so much. There are stories out indicating that this administration is considering releasing the Blind Sheikh. He's credited with help-

ing mastermind the first attempt to bring down our World Trade Centers. He is credited as the Islamic fanatic who issued the fatwa that was considered by the radical extremist jihadists to justify killing thousands and thousands of Americans—what they hoped would be tens of thousands of Americans—at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. One report indicated that with regard to the Pentagon, if the plane had not just brushed across a berm outside the parking lot before it hit, it probably would have gone all the way into the interior, doing a massive amount of more damage than it actually did. Because of the valiant work of so many first responders, there weren't tens of thousands killed at the World Trade Center. But we suffered the loss of 3,000 murdered because of some religious fanatics, the Blind Sheikh being one of them.

The story is out yesterday and today that the administration is considering the release of the Blind Sheikh and other American murderers so that we can obtain the complete release from Egypt of people that went there to try to help the Egyptians have free and fair elections. And in return for going there and providing the billions of dollars this country gives to Egypt and continues to give, in return, the people in charge—that this administration welcomed in charge of the Egyptian Government, as they stabbed an ally name Mubarak with whom they had written agreements—I'm not saying he's a great man; I'm saying this country, this administration, had agreements with that man, and this administration broke those agreements and stabbed him in the back. As a result, now we have Americans in harm's way, some of them in the Embassy in Egypt.

Now, the reports are that the administration is considering releasing murderers, people who planned and were complicit in murders and attempted murders of Americans, and this administration is considering releasing them and may be negotiating that.

Now, I'm hoping that this report is what this administration has done many times, and that is release a trial balloon to see how people react. And if people react violently enough—verbally, that is—against it, then they will say, hey, no, we never planned to do that. And I'm hopeful that that will be the case here. People who have been responsible for murdering and attempting to murder Americans have no business being used as bargaining chips. If the rule of law and of justice is going to mean anything in this country going forward, we cannot be bargaining with American liberty.

Now, some of us recall very well in 1979 when an act of war occurred by the people, by the Government of Iran in Tehran, against the American Embassy. Everyone's idea of international law indicates that the soil on which an Embassy exists is the soil of that country. If you attack the Embassy, then you have attacked that country. And it