

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Speaker, after meeting with President Trump yesterday regarding the ongoing crisis in Venezuela, I rise to praise the Trump administration for its mindful and strategic response to conditions in that country.

All options must be on the table, including military force.

My constituents would likely be among the first in that fight. I am incredibly proud of them. If asked, they will successfully execute any mission that they are called to do.

Policymakers have an obligation not to send any of America's sons and daughters into any ill-advised conflict. The Trump administration clearly understands the risks associated with military intervention in Venezuela at this time. They include a few things.

First, if the United States military were to have troops on the ground in Venezuela today, it is very likely that the Maduro regime would scapegoat their own failures.

The people of Venezuela voted their way into socialism, and now it appears they have to fight their way out of it. While this should be a lesson to us all, military intervention should not be presented as an opportunity for the Maduro regime to explain away why people in Venezuela have no medicine, have no food, are starving, and at times see their own countrymen turning tanks and weapons against them.

Those failures belong to the Maduro regime. Those failures belong to the socialist dictatorship.

Were we to intervene in an unwise way, potentially, that would create confusion about the conditions that led to these terrible circumstances.

Second, if the United States military were to intervene at this time, it is my concern that it would allow the Maduro regime to externalize their conflict.

It is no surprise to any in this Chamber or many in the Trump administration that there remains some latent resentment within pockets of Latin America regarding U.S. intervention, regime change, and nation-building.

At a time when we are seeing democratic successes and governments stood up that are beginning to provide for their citizens, it would be deeply unwise to stoke any anti-American resentment with ill-advised conflict.

Right now, Maduro functionally lacks material support from the forward-thinking countries in the Western Hemisphere, and we would not want to create any opportunity for there to be a call to the new Bolivarian alliance.

Ultimately, that is what a lot of these transnational criminal organizations want in Venezuela. They want to erode nation-states and borders. They want to end nationalism in our hemisphere so that they have a more permissive environment for their illicit activities.

Third, the Trump administration clearly understands that, if the United States were deemed to be too involved

in the popular uprising in Venezuela, Maduro would potentially have the opportunity to deny the organic desires of Venezuelans to fight for their own freedom.

The reason people are rising up in Venezuela right now is not a consequence of the United States Government. It is a consequence of the failures of their own government and their passionate desire for freedom, one that we should stand with the people of Venezuela to execute.

Despite these conditions and despite the challenges, I remain hopeful that there is a brighter future for Venezuela. As we meet and gather now, Juan Guaido is able to go about the country freely. Despite not having a military, despite not having staff, he is able to rally thousands of his fellow countrymen in public squares and make the argument for freedom.

Meanwhile, the coward Maduro remains huddled up in a military base, unable to move around and unsure who will turn on him next.

If the last quarter century has taught our country anything about the nature of freedom, it is that freedom has to be fought for hardest by those who yearn to live it. Freedom cannot be the gift that America gives other countries, purchased solely with the currency of the blood of U.S. servicemembers.

People have to fight for freedom and earn it. They have to die for it. They have to bury their relatives over it. Then they have to love it and care for it so much that they will never let another strongman take it away from them and so that they will never fall victim to the passions that led Venezuela down this dark path to socialism, dictatorship, starvation, and desperation.

We stand with the people of Venezuela, and they must stand now to fight for a better future for their country.

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 26 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CLAY) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: Eternal God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

You look upon our world: men and women being born and being laid to rest, some getting married and others

getting divorced, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the happy and the sad, so many people aimless, despairing, hateful, and killing, so many undernourished, sick, and dying, so many struggling with life and blind to any meaning.

Send us Your spirit, that the issues of our day might be met with compassion by the Members of this House and all who serve to improve the conditions of our shared humanity.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNIZING FREDERICK WILLIAM RUSTEBERG

(Mr. VELA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Frederick William Rusteberg of Brownsville, Texas.

Mr. Rusteberg served the majority of his professional career as the original founding CEO and president of International Bank of Commerce in Brownsville until his retirement on October 27, 2016.

In the early 1970s, Mr. Rusteberg served his country as an officer in the United States Army.