

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, today I am going to continue what the Senate has been doing since our troops started the invasion of Iraq, and that is to take the first period before we go on to the business of the day to salute the troops who are in the field protecting our freedom.

Today, I want to salute the members of the 507th Maintenance Company. This is the company out of Fort Bliss in El Paso, TX, who really were the first to be captured, the first prisoners of war shown on Iraqi television. Some of them have now been recovered, but there are still five missing.

The rescue of PFC Jessica Lynch was a moment of triumph but also sadness, as the celebration was tempered by the recovery of the remains of fallen soldiers who were later identified as her comrades in arms. General Renuart at CENTCOM described the rescue this way: A special ops soldier called to Private Lynch saying:

Jessica Lynch, we're United States soldiers and we're here to protect you and take you home. . . .

As he walked over to her bed, took his helmet off, she looked up to him and said:

I'm an American soldier, too.

General Renuart also described the recovery of the remains of the soldiers who had been killed because they were told by the same sources that there were remains of other soldiers on the ground outside the hospital where Jessica lay. He said:

At the same time, the team was led to a burial site, where, in fact, they did find a number of bodies that they believed could be Americans missing in action. They did not have shovels in order to dig those graves up, so they dug them up with their hands. And they wanted to do that very rapidly so they could race the sun and be off the site before the sun came up; a great testament to the will and desire of coalition forces to bring their own home.

That one line says all you will ever need to know about the character of the young men and women in the military today, who refuse to leave their fallen comrades behind: They dug them up with their hands, and raced the sun.

On Friday evening, the families of those whose remains were recovered were officially notified that their loved ones had been killed in action. We mourn their loss.

They were PFC Lori Ann Piestewa, the first American woman soldier killed in the Iraq war. This is a picture showing the two friends, PFC Jessica Lynch and PFC Lori Piestewa. They were at Fort Bliss the day of their deployment. They were roommates and friends.

Private First Class Piestewa was a Hopi Indian, one of the few American Indian women serving in the military. She was PFC Jessica Lynch's good friend and roommate.

"Our family is proud of her; she is our hero," her brother Wayland said Saturday. "We are going to hold that

in our hearts. She will not be forgotten. It gives us comfort to know that she is at peace right now."

Behind me are the pictures of some who have died in action, and I am going to speak about each of them.

In Texas, there is a town called Comfort that lived up to its name by embracing and comforting the parents of SP James Kiehl. In Comfort, TX, the parents of SP James M. Kiehl are being comforted by their friends and neighbors. The 6-foot 8-inch soldier was a high school basketball player and a member of the band. The people of Comfort, moved by James' death, created an impromptu memorial where basketballs, flower arrangements, personal notes, and even baseball bats have been left as tributes to James. His father summed up the family's feelings this way:

We just want everyone to know we support the President and the troops, and we believe in what James went over there for.

James Kiehl's wife, Jill, is staying with her parents in Des Moines, IA, and is expecting their first child next month.

In Mobile, AL, Rev. Howard Johnson, Sr., buried his son, Army PFC Howard Johnson, Jr., from the same pulpit of the Truevine Baptist Church where he had stood so many times offering words of comfort to his congregation. Reverend Johnson said of his son:

Howard, you out ran me, but I'll see you in the morning.

SGT Donald Walters of Kansas City, MO, fought in Operation Desert Storm and had followed in his father's footsteps by joining the military. His father, Norman Walters, is an Air Force veteran and said this about his son:

He was a patriotic guy. He felt it was his duty to serve his country.

Sergeant Walters leaves behind a wife and three daughters.

MSG Robert Dowdy and PVT Brandon Sloan were both from Cleveland, OH. Master Sergeant Dowdy's brother-in-law had this to say about the career soldier:

He was ready to accept the challenge. That's the type of person he was. He knew going in what he was in store for and who he was and what he was about.

Private Sloan's father, the Rev. Tandy Sloan, proudly said his son "was very committed to the cause of country."

PVT Ruben Estrella-Soto was from El Paso, TX. This is his graduation picture. His father said his son

had a lot of desire to do something with his life, and wanted to go into the military so he could get education.

CWO Johnny Villareal Mata was from Amarillo, TX. He played football on the Pecos High School Eagles football team and graduated in 1986. Soon thereafter he joined the Army. The family remembered him this way:

Our hearts are saddened, and we share the pain with the other families. He will be deeply missed and will never be forgotten.

SP Jamaal Addison of Roswell, GA, is remembered by his step-grandmother

as "a mild-mannered, quiet child" who attended Bible study every Wednesday night before joining the Army.

The 507th Maintenance Company still has five soldiers who are prisoners of war. They are SP Shoshana Johnson, SP Edgar Hernandez, SP Joseph Hudson, PFC Patrick Miller, and SGT James Riley. I have talked with Claude Johnson, Shoshana's father, several times. He and his wife Eunice are caring for Shoshana's 2-year-old daughter.

These five have not been seen publicly since several hours after they were taken prisoner March 23, and the International Committee of the Red Cross has not yet been able to visit them in captivity. We join all Americans in urging the Iraqi Government to treat those prisoners in accordance with the Geneva Convention, just as we have treated the thousands of Iraqi prisoners we hold.

We pray those prisoners of war from the 507th Maintenance Company will be returned safely to their families. We pay tribute to them today for the sacrifices they have made.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to pay tribute to our men and women in uniform serving at home and abroad and honor their service to this Nation. Our service men and women have risen to the call in the fight against terrorism. They have risen to the call to ensure peace and stability in the world. And they have risen to the call to provide humanitarian aid to those in need.

One of the great aspects about America is our military. We have a history in our armed services, a rich and deep history of honor and integrity, and we see that firsthand in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

I wish to acknowledge the ultimate sacrifice of two of our servicemen who fell in the line of duty: Hospital Corpsman Michael Vann Johnson, Jr., a 25-year-old Navy medic serving in the 3rd Battalion of the 5th Marine Expeditionary Force. Michael was born in Little Rock where his mother still lives. I talked with her by phone the other day. She is a soldier in her own right.

LCpl Thomas Blair was a 24-year-old marine whose father, Al Blair, resides in Gravette, AR.

They died very bravely, both serving their country and both trying to make life better for mankind. I pray for their families, and I honor them as brave and selfless men who put their lives on the line to make the world safer for others.

I also pray for Iraq and the Iraqi people. I pray that after Saddam Hussein leaves power and that regime ends, the next government in Iraq will be peaceful; that it will not be oppressive of its own people; that it will not be aggressive toward its neighbors; that Iraq will become a solid rock in the Middle East and in that part of the world and a model of stability.

I also honor the service of LCpl James, or as we know him, "Jason,"

Smedley of the U.S. Marine Corps. Jason was wounded in combat and, by the grace of God, he is returning to us now. When not fighting for his country, he serves in the office of my colleague from Arkansas, Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN, assisting Arkansans. We look forward to having Jason back, around and helping Arkansans in the many ways he does.

Military service is not a job; it is a calling. It takes a special person to pledge to serve their country, risking life and limb in doing so. It takes courage, commitment, and a true sense of self to be prepared to deploy and fight for America.

I have two young children, ages 7 and 9, and I think about the children of our military men and women. I think about the boys and girls whose fathers and mothers are far from home or working long hours in the United States. I want them to know we appreciate the sacrifices they are making, that we admire their valor in keeping their spirits up, and that their parents are doing a job that epitomizes the best in human character.

I pray to God for peace, for world peace, and for the safe return of our troops, and I thank God. I thank God for allowing me to serve the people of this Nation in this way. As a Senator and a member of the Armed Services Committee, I stand ready to work with my colleagues and the President to provide any and all support possible to ensure the success of our military forces conducting these operations.

Our Nation is one of diverse views, diverse ideologies, and diverse opinions. That is one of the aspects that make America great. We might not all agree on how we got to this point; nonetheless, we come together as one country to support the service men and women who are currently risking life and limb for this great Nation. They put themselves in harm's way not for personal aggrandizement or advancement but for immense love of country, liberty, and family.

If they can hear me today, I say be assured that the American people are behind you.

When appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee a few weeks ago, GEN John Keane, Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, testified to the courage of our military personnel. He said, when asked what is their greatest challenge, his division commanders replied: Keeping our soldiers from being too brave. They are brave, but we want them to return home.

This is not just for our regular Armed Forces but also for our Reserves and our members of the National Guard. They all play a very key role in maintaining strong national defense. Just as we should thank our military overseas and at home, we should also thank our first responders who protect our hometowns. Firefighters, police, health care personnel, they risk their lives every day and sacrifice precious

time with their families every day to keep us safe from those who would try to do us harm. Their commitment and contributions to national security and homeland security should not be forgotten. We all salute their spirit.

I urge all Americans to pray for our troops, their families and our President, as we defend our Nation and the world from those who seek to do us harm.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, as I stand on the floor of the Senate, it is crystal clear that the reign of the dictator of Iraq is quickly coming to an end. In fact, he may already have fallen as a result of yesterday's bombings. There is no question that his death grip around the throats of the Iraqi people is being lifted; his fingers pried by American, British, and other coalition forces at places such as Basra, Mosul, and Baghdad. But the freedom of Iraq has come at a loss, a loss of American, British, and Iraqi lives. I mourn the death of each and every one of our sons and daughters, folks who volunteered to stand in harm's way for freedom and liberties we wish for all people. They are sons and daughters of a great American revolution that never ends. The cause of freedom and liberty never ends.

We see pictures every day of uncommon valor, the soldiers who rescued a young Jessica Lynch from her captors, the young men and women who dashed hundreds of miles from Iraq to the borders of Baghdad to liberate the people of that oppressed nation, or the soldiers—and there was one scene I watched on the news of three soldiers with a reporter. They had enough juice in a cell phone to make one call. One of the soldier's wives was pregnant, but instead of calling their families, they chose to call the parents of a fallen comrade to see how his mom and dad were doing.

There are dozens of pictures of American soldiers comforting the people of Iraq, bringing them food and offering them compassion. These are America's sons and daughters. They are the pictures of America that the world sees today. They are the pictures of America that bring hope to oppressed people of the world. They are SPC Joshua Sams of St. Francis, MN, a paratrooper in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Following in the boot steps of a military family, Joshua's father was in the Army during the Korean war. Two of his brothers are in the Army now and one is in the National Guard awaiting deployment. Joshua joined the National Guard at the age of 17. After 2 years, he wanted to do more for his country, and Joshua's mom said her son had trained hard for months and was anxious to go to Iraq, was ready to go to Iraq, ready to heed the call of duty. Two weeks ago today, Joshua was among the brave paratroopers who leapt into northern Iraq and remains

there today guarding a vital airstrip. Thank you, Joshua, for your service, for your commitment and for your bravery.

I would also like to take a moment to pay tribute to David Bloom, a Minnesotan. Like millions of Americans, I watched the broadcasts of David Bloom of NBC from Iraq, a young man full of promise with a young vibrant family. This dedicated reporter left all of us much too soon. It is a long way from the shady streets of Edina, MN, David Bloom's hometown, to the outskirts of Baghdad. We are heartbroken at the death of David Bloom.

Like every other American, he was there as a volunteer. His job was not to fight but to help tell the world the truth about the courage and integrity of our country, even at war. He turned out to be an outstanding representative of these qualities himself.

Americans have always known that freedom and security come at a terribly high price. It humbles and inspires us all how many are willing to pay it for us. David Bloom made Minnesotans proud and he served his profession and his Nation with great valor. Our prayers and support will be with his spouse and his daughters.

I would like to use the words of some of his colleagues and friends to demonstrate the professionalism and humanism of this wonderful reporter. The following remarks were on MSNBC recently. Tom Brokaw said:

David was the consummate reporter. He'd land in my office without knocking, slide the chair up to my desk and then begin to suck all the oxygen out of the room asking questions how to cover the story or who should he be contacting. And then, in a flash, he'd be gone.

Tim Russert, one of David's mentors, says:

He had a sense of decency and civility. He didn't go for the cheap shot. You fuse that with professionalism, and he had something viewers wanted to watch, embrace.

Yes, the sacrifice of our troops and their families must never be forgotten. But we must also remember the outpouring of love back at home and the countless acts of kindness and support on behalf of our fighting men and women. I think of the small Catholic grade school in Hampton, MN, that has just 57 students in the entire school. The schoolchildren came up with a wonderful way to show their affection and appreciation for our troops on the battlefield.

They issued a "penny challenge" last week. Each class was given a pail and children were asked to drop pennies, do what they can, even on a small scale to show their support. Administrators were amazed at how much money they raised, more than \$1,000 with the money going for care packages to U.S. troops in Iraq. Parents were very supportive as well, but the smallest children were the ones who collected the most money, the kindergartners.

Another show of support came from the magic of television. Believe it or

not, the first pitch of the Minnesota Twins's home opener this week was thrown out from the Middle East by a group of Minnesota soldiers. Josh Tverger, a U.S. Army specialist from Norwood Young America, MN, threw out the first pitch from the Kuwaiti desert. In the Metro Dome, Army SP Greta Lind of Le Sueur, MN, was on the receiving end. It was all accomplished through the spectacular technical satellite links similar to what our military has put to such stunning use on the battlefield, and now on the ballfield.

Yes, there is much love at home. There is also much sadness in many homes and villages of those who have given their lives. We thank them. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who are on the front line today. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. If we could hug every one of them, moms and dads and sisters and brothers, I would do it and I know the Senator from Georgia would do the same.

They have our love. They have our prayers. They have our thoughts. God bless them all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Minnesota for a wonderful statement. Certainly, every single life that is lost over there is appreciated and will be appreciated forever in the hearts of Americans because those young men and women are protecting the freedom we enjoy.

David Bloom, a constituent of the Senator from Minnesota, was also protecting our way of life. He was protecting the freedom of the press. He was serving so well to do that. I knew David personally, as most Members did, because he was such a special person and he did his job, worked hard, and was here a lot. We very much miss him and we know so many of his colleagues miss him, as well.

Mr. President, I wish to talk about T.R. Fehrenbach, a constituent of mine, who wrote what many think is the definitive book on the Korean war called "This Kind of War." It is appropriate today. We have been amazed at the technological capability of our military in the war in Iraq. They have launched missiles, dropped bombs, and delivered other ordnance on the battlefield with pinpoint accuracy. I came across a picture today reminiscent of our soldiers from an earlier era that reminds me of some basic truths that apply no matter how much technological capability we might acquire.

I have a picture of American troops from the Army's 101st Airborne Division marching into Bastogne during World War II. This was the counter-attack against the Germans. We see the 101st Airborne Division. I have another picture taken last week of the 101st Airborne Division, nearly 60 years later—a column from the First Brigade march into Najaf, Iraq, on Wednesday,

April 2, 2003, doing basically the same thing.

These photographs demonstrate an old axiom about military operations that was written by Ted Fehrenbach in "This Kind of War," a book about the Korean war:

Americans in 1950 rediscovered something that since Hiroshima they had forgotten: You may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life—but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud.

I know Ted Fehrenbach and I know he would have said today, by putting your brave young soldiers and marines in the mud, because what he is saying essentially is the same today as it was in 1950. And that is, if you want to protect a land and keep it for civilization, you must have our young men and women willing to go in on the ground. The truth is still the same today.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS CLOSED

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COLEMAN). Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF PRISCILLA RICHMAN OWEN, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now go into executive session and resume consideration of Executive Calendar 86, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Priscilla Richman Owen, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Mr. HATCH. I rise today to express my unqualified support for the confirmation of Justice Priscilla Owen to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Last evening I talked about the importance of this debate and this vote. I talked about this vote as an opportunity to remedy the mistreatment Justice Owen received last September when she was voted down in committee, along party lines, and blocked from receiving a Senate vote. We know she would have been confirmed in the Senate by both Democrat and Republican Members, but unfortunately she was never allowed to make it to that point. I talked about this vote as an opportunity for the Senate to show we can be fair to a well-qualified nominee and provide him or her a simple up-or-down vote.

Finally, I talked about this vote as an opportunity to place a great judge, Justice Owen, on the bench. I convened a hearing for Justice Owen last month because I wanted to provide all of my colleagues an opportunity to ask questions of her and to hear her answers. I

want to clear up misstatements and misrepresentations of her record dating back to last year. I was confident Justice Owen would again demonstrate her intelligence and capacity for Federal judicial service. To put it mildly, she certainly did not disappoint. She handled questions with insightful and substantive answers. She was a superb witness, one of the best we have ever had before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

We heard valuable testimony from Senator CORNYN, a new Senator, but no newcomer to Justice Owen's record or the workings of the Judiciary. In fact, he served with Justice Owen on the Texas Supreme Court for a period of 3 years, serving side by side with her. He had been a Texas trial judge before that time. He also served as a Texas State attorney general for the last 3 years. Senator CORNYN answered a frequent criticism leveled at Justice Owen, a criticism that is false, that she is out of the mainstream on her own court. If anyone would know whether Justice Owen, in fact, fits this characterization, Senator CORNYN would know. He worked next to her, heard the very same oral arguments she did, examined and debated the same law and facts with her, and decided the very same cases she did.

There is no doubt, then, Justice Cornyn disagreed with Justice Owen at times. I can reel off a few case names as well as anyone. But the significant thing is that he supports her confirmation despite attempts by some to create division where none exists.

Former Texas Supreme Court Justices John L. Hill, Jack Hightower, and Raul Gonzalez, all Democrats, are united in concurring with Senator CORNYN's opinion calling Justice Owen unbiased and restrained in her decisionmaking and applauding her for her impeccable integrity, for her great character and great scholarship. The diverse and formidable group, made up of 15 former presidents of the Texas State bar, wrote in a letter of support: Although we prefer different party affiliations and span the spectrum of views of legal and policy issues, we stand united in affirming that Justice Owen is a true, unique, and outstanding candidate for the appointment to the Fifth Circuit.

There is no dissent from Hector De Leon, immediate past president of Legal Aid of Central Texas, who applauds Justice Owen's commitment to improving the quality of legal services for the poor, or from Mary Sean O'Reilly, lifelong member of the NAACP, pro-choice Democrat who worked with Justice Owen on gender and family law issues. They are joined in support by E. Thomas Bishop, president of the Texas Association of Defense Counsel, who writes: I cannot imagine a more qualified, ethical, and knowledgeable person to sit on the Fifth Circuit; and William B. Emmons, self-styled Texas trial attorney, Democrat, and "no friend of Priscilla