

and to recognize the value and integrity of these countries and territories, not only because of their importance to our national defense in homeland security and economic stability but because they are also sovereign nations in their own right, with a long history of democratically elected governments.

As the Delegate from one of this country's two Caribbean offshore areas, the health of the region has a direct impact on my district and constituents, even more directly than it does on our larger Nation. We offer ourselves and that of the recently formed Caribbean Caucus as mediators to restore the relationships and mutual support that we used to enjoy with the members of CARICOM.

July 4 is our most important national holiday. It is interesting that this is the same day that CARICOM was founded. Perhaps the sharing of this date may form the basis of the beginning of that new and improved relationship.

INTRODUCING RESOLUTION TO BRING GREAT AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM OF STALKING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, Peggy Klinke was a constituent of mine from Albuquerque, New Mexico. She was murdered in January of this year by a former boyfriend who was obsessed with her and stalked her for almost 2 years. Today I will be introducing a resolution to this House to bring greater awareness of the problem of stalking in America and the things that we need to do to protect its victims. It is my pleasure that Debbie Riddle and Mark Spark are here today. Debbie was Peggy's sister and Mark was her boyfriend. I wanted to thank them for joining me here today in the House.

More than 1 million women a year and almost 400,000 men are stalked annually. Those numbers are staggering. One in 12 women and one in 45 men in their lifetime will be stalked. Yet the problem continues to go mostly unrecognized and not responded to properly. The bill that I am introducing would make January Stalking Awareness Month in honor of Peggy in the month that she died.

The first step in addressing any problem is to understand that problem and make sure that other people do, because until people understand it, you cannot mobilize the will for change. We need model laws and to make sure those model laws are implemented in every State in this country. We need to identify the best practices for dealing with stalkers, practical things proven to work in the field that can be used by victims and also by law enforcement to make sure victims are safer. We need

to better train our police and our district attorneys so that they know what tools they have at their disposal when they are dealing with a stalker. And we need better cross-jurisdictional communication.

Eleven percent of stalking victims move to get away from their stalker. As soon as they do, you have got two police departments, two district attorneys and two judicial systems supposedly working together but often not communicating about the victim and the stalker. No one should have to live in fear without protection and without hope. I believe that this resolution is the first step to getting better protection for the victims of stalkers.

I ask the House to rapidly consider the resolution and pass it from this House.

U.S. SUCCESS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, 227 years ago 56 men put their lives, their families and fortunes on the line as they defied the most powerful country in the world, England. These men declared independence and our country was born by a swift stroke of a pen. This weekend we celebrated our country's 227th birthday. This country, of course, has survived many conflicts, both foreign and domestic, and we have survived due to the fact that American men and women always have answered the call should our rights and our freedoms come under attack. In the last couple of years, terror has taken on a new meaning to this country and its citizens. We have been threatened like never before. With an amazing outpouring of patriotism, we refused to allow the mantle of freedom to be taken from our shoulders.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, with the end of Operation Sidewinder in Iraq, our Armed Forces have experienced tremendous success. Yet we remain confronted with the sad truth that this success has come at a cost of American lives. Over the weekend, a Florida National Guard soldier from my congressional district was killed. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends and I also mourn his loss. I had the opportunity to meet this young man at the community college he attended while serving in the National Guard. His presence, enthusiasm and dedication exemplifies the men and women of our Armed Forces that continue to serve in Iraq.

From Afghanistan to Iraq and possibly Liberia, our troops face life-threatening situations. But they fight for those who yearn for freedom, who cannot fight for themselves. All who wish for democracy know that America can be the source of the freedoms that have so long eluded them. Our troops liberated 24 million Iraqis and gave

them the opportunity for freedom that had been denied them for so long. As such, rebuilding a country neglected for decades by a worthless tyrant takes time, it takes patience, it takes perseverance. Iraq is showing signs that the efforts of our troops are yielding large gains. We have over half of the Iraqis most wanted in custody. We are training Iraqis to police and govern themselves as a free nation. Iraqis have access to a growing number of publications, newspapers and magazines replacing the propaganda of the state-run news that previously existed. Electricity is running 24 hours a day in Basra and improvements are being made in Baghdad. According to reports now, Hussein would black out parts of Baghdad simply because there was not sufficient generation of power for the entire city. Our people are working to change that and they are working very, very hard.

Mr. Speaker, many in some parts of the media seem not only content but resolute in reporting only those stories that portray bad news. Remember, some of these same people called our initial military strategy a failure after less than a week of combat. But I find it perplexing that all we hear from some reporters are stories describing an Iraq that is a viper's nest of Saddam loyalists and full of an angry civilian population who want us to leave. However, unlike some of our media reporting, I believe normal, everyday people in this country realize that it will take time to foster democracy and to quell attempts to destabilize fledgling new, free governments. Today's copy of *The Hill* magazine touched on this issue and quoted dozens of soldiers who seem to be baffled by the endless wave of negative press. One helicopter pilot is quoted as saying, "The media has misrepresented Iraqi resistance. For the most part, people here are extremely friendly to us." He goes on to say that, quote, crime in Baghdad is one-tenth of what it is in Los Angeles. Finally, according to a poll taken by the Iraq Center for Research & Strategic Studies, it was found that 65 percent of Baghdadis want U.S. troops to stay for how. Only 17 percent wanted them to pull out immediately.

Let us look at what the U.S. has accomplished. For that, of course, we need look no further than the words of General Tommy Franks in his recent retirement speech when he said, "When we arrived, the Taliban and al Qaeda controlled Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq with an iron hand. What a difference 22 months makes. Twenty-two months ago, the United States of America and the free world looked into the face of evil and defeated it." Now we are moving closer to freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yes, there is a tremendous amount of work to be done but the peace is not lost. With where we are today, the glass for continued democracy in these countries is over half full.