

is not found to stop the spiral of violence from widening.

It is clear that a buffer zone patrolled by an international force is urgently needed along the Israeli-Lebanese border to prevent these kinds of violent incursions against Israel and its people, and that Hezbollah must be disarmed in order for Lebanon to finally finally—break free of Syria's harsh grip.

While hundreds of Hezbollah's missiles continue to rain down on Israel, Israel's military response has also caused the deaths of hundreds of civilians in Lebanon, including four United Nations observers. One of the latest tragedies is the destruction by an Israeli missile of an apartment building in Qana that resulted in 57 Lebanese deaths including 34 children, children who were not terrorists.

Secretary Rice's whirlwind visits to the region have been welcome but they have produced few tangible results. This type of crisis diplomacy rarely achieves lasting solutions. She is also occupied with a widening civil war in Iraq, resurgent Taliban violence in Afghanistan, an increasingly recalcitrant and aggressive regime in North Korea, a worsening humanitarian crisis in Darfur with no end in sight, the specter of a nuclear-weapons-capable Iran in the world's future, and other pressing problems. She is simply unable to focus the sustained, high-level attention on the Middle East crisis that is needed.

I and others like my friend from Nebraska, Senator HAGEL, have urged President Bush to appoint a special envoy with the stature and the authority to work on a continual basis to help broker an immediate cease-fire and long term solutions to Israel's conflicts with Hamas and Hezbollah someone who wakes up every single day with the challenge, the portfolio and especially the authority to help resolve this conflict. I renew this call for such an envoy again today.

Some U.S. officials have questioned the possibility of a cease-fire with a terrorist organization like Hezbollah. That is a valid question, but cease-fires have been achieved with other terrorist groups, and while imperfect the results have been sharp reductions in violence.

A cease-fire is needed immediately in Lebanon, to be followed with similar urgency by the deployment of an international peacekeeping force on the border. Too many innocent people are dying innocent people—in both countries. A peacekeeping force is necessary to prevent further loss of Lebanese and Israeli lives.

The United States is committed to protecting Israel's security and we support Israel's right of self defense, including going after Hezbollah fighters who often launch their attacks from civilian areas.

But for Israel's sake, for ours and especially especially—for the sake of innocent lives on both sides of these battle lines, it is vitally important to ask whether destroying Lebanon—not

Hezbollah, but destroying Lebanon—will make Israel more secure or instead rally Muslims behind Hezbollah and give rise to further hatred and insecurity. I believe that continued bombing of civilian areas in Lebanon will not destroy Hezbollah, but in a perverse way, it may strengthen it.

The fact that these attacks are being carried out with such intensity and are yielding so much death and destruction, with weapons supplied by the United States, and at a time when we are trying to repair our already frayed relations with Muslims around the world, is all the more reason for the United States and the people of Israel to consider and answer this question frankly and honestly. I am concerned, as others have also warned, that a short-term tactical victory—even if possible—could prove to be a hollow victory at great human cost.

We should also reflect on the circumstances that preceded this crisis. For the past 5 years, the Bush administration's approach to the Middle East has been either to ignore it or to parachute in for just enough time for a few handshakes and photographs. There has never been an effective strategy. They have never been willing to expend any political capital. Their policy toward Syria and Iran has been erratic and ineffective. Their relations with the Palestinians have stagnated.

It was clear since the earliest days of this administration that this laxity would define their approach to these tinderbox issues, and the terrible harm of that approach—to our ally Israel, to the Palestinians, and to the prospects for resuming a meaningful peace process in that region is all the more clear today.

I am not among those who believe that the United States pulls all the strings in the Middle East. There are forces there over which we have only limited influence.

But neither do I believe there can be a lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict without the active, creative and sustained engagement of the United States, including direct talks with those with whom we strongly disagree, like Syria and Iran. That has been sorely lacking under this administration, and we are witnessing the price of that neglect in Lebanon and Israel today.

A CALL TO DUTY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize two acts of selfless courage that exemplify the willingness of Iowans to accept and fulfill their Nation's call to duty. The actions of US Marine Corps Sgt. R.J. Mitchell and Sergeant Major Bradley Kasal have earned each of them the Navy Cross. Awarded for their actions during a November 2004 assault on Fallujah, the Navy Cross is among the highest awards for gallantry our Nation can bestow on those who serve. More than this, they have earned the respect of a

nation and the thanks of its people by ensuring that the cause of freedom and its protection not only survives but thrives in the face of every challenge.

Sergeant Mitchell, who grew up near Carson, IA, was awarded the Navy Cross on July 28. Sergeant Major Kasal, originally from Afton, IA received his award May 1 as well as a promotion to sergeant major. During an assault on a house in Fallujah, both Iowans charged to the aid of fellow wounded marines, remaining in the line of fire and continuing to provide leadership to fellow marines until the last injured marine was safely evacuated. Over the course of the engagement, both sustained wounds from enemy fire and shrapnel but continued on in harm's way, saving the lives of several marines as a result of their selfless actions.

I extend my personal gratitude, that of all Iowans, and all Americans, to these brave marines. It is in their selfless acts of courage that the very meaning of honor can be found. The Navy Cross is more than an adornment, it symbolizes the respect and appreciation of the American people. Through these heroic acts in service to their country, Brad Kasal and R.J. Mitchell truly embodied the motto of Iowa, "Our liberties we prize, and our rights we will maintain."

THANKING SUMMER INTERNS

BILL BLEWETT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I rise to thank Bill Blewett, an intern in my Sioux Falls, SD office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the state of South Dakota this summer.

Bill is a graduate of Stevens High School in Rapid City, SD, and Black Hills State University. Currently, he attends the University of South Dakota School of Law. He is a hard worker and has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I give my thanks to Bill and wish him continued success in the years to come.

DAN ENGLISH

Mr. President, today I rise to thank Dan English, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota this summer.

Dan is a graduate of O'Gorman High School in Sioux Falls, SD, and after returning from a year abroad at the London School of Economics will be a senior at the University of Richmond where he is studying economics and political science. He is a hard worker and has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I give my thanks to Dan and wish him continued success in the years to come.

KYLE HOLDT

Mr. President, today I rise to thank Kyle Holdt, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard