support the surge, $90 billion to support the expansion of this war. Why should he get out as long as we are giving him the money?

What are we supposed to accomplish? What are we trying to do? The President would tell you that somehow we are supposed to provide the security and we are supposed to train so that the Iraqis will be able to provide security. We are supposed to make the Shiites get along with the Sunnis and the Sunnis get along with the Kurds. I don't think so. I think that we don't understand the history. And I don't think that we understand, no matter who we think we are, we cannot forge the kinds of relationships that somehow we are going to stay there until we make people love and like each other and work together.

Who wants us in Iraq? They call us the occupiers. As a matter of fact, we find that legislators that are supposedly in this new democratic government, one was revealed this morning to have all kinds of weapons found at his house. All kinds of weapons. And they found traces of chemicals in his four automobiles. This is one of the so-called elected members of the parliament. They do not want us there. The Shiites don't want us there, the Sunnis don't want us there, the Kurds don't want us there. And we have our young people at risk. They are at risk. They are being attacked by the militias, and they are being attacked by the very police forces that are supposed to be on the ground helping to provide security.

Well, in the final analysis, our only response must be to have an exit strategy. The Out of Iraq Caucus that was organized 1½ years ago did not say when we should get out; it did not tell the President exactly what the strategy should be. We simply created a platform for discussion and debate so that the Members of Congress would keep their eyes on the ball so that they would understand what was going on and not have information swept under the rug. We invited in speakers. We had generals to come in; we had writers to come in. We had many people come in and talk with us about what is going on there. But this President doesn't get it. He is intending to stay there until he does something called ''win,'' with young people losing their lives, the children of families all over America, not just from inner cities but most of them now we are finding coming from rural America. They will continue to die.

In another year we are going to have thousands that will be dead. In another year there will be thousands that will be injured. And the shame of it all is that they won't find the kind of medical care. They had a big article today and information about the homeless veterans returning from Iraq. They are homeless, they are not being cared for, they are not getting the benefits. But we are going to continue this war. I would submit to you it is time for a change. Bring our soldiers home.

Mr. HINCHEY. Ms. WATERS, I thank you very much for your dynamic leadership and for joining us this evening and for those remarks.

I yield to my good friend and colleague from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE).

Mr. PAYNE. Let me begin by thanking the gentleman from New York for this Special Order and bringing to the American people the very important issue that stands before us. And I would like to commend the Out of Iraq Caucus, but primarily the three women from California, Congresswoman WOOLSEY, Congresswoman LEE, and Congresswoman WATERS, who have kept this particular issue alive, have continued to work with us to shape a policy or keep the conscience of America focused on this situation, a situation that we gave preemptive strike authority to the President of United States, which all of us opposed, when they said there were weapons of mass destruction; and when none were found, said, well, it was regime change was the final one.

But today, we mark the fourth anniversary of the occupation in Iraq. Ironically, it was almost 4 years ago on May 1, 2003, that President Bush deemed the operation in Iraq as ''mission accomplished,'' affirming an end to the major combat in Iraq. As you may recall, he flew in a military plane on an aircraft carrier with a big sign and a brilliant smile on his face, ''Mission Accomplished.''

By that time, approximately 175 Americans had lost their lives in combat. Too many, but 175. Yet 3,197 lives later, American lives later, the war continues; 3,197 more from the pronouncement of ''mission accomplished.'' Included in this number are 50 fatalities from my home State of New Jersey.

This weekend, thousands of protesters took to the streets to demand an end to the war in Iraq. As an early and staunch opponent to this war, I have watched every single prediction made by this administration. They have boldly said what they predicted, and every time the prediction was wrong: from the duration of the war, wrong; the reception we would receive, wrong; the costs, wrong; the number of casualties, wrong; the existence of weapons of mass destruction, wrong. This administration has proven itself wrong, wrong, wrong. The countless number of Americans and Iraqis who have lost their lives is sad.

The administration should listen to the Baker-Hamilton Commission, which has offered a stinging assessment of virtually every aspect of the U.S. venture in Iraq and calls for a reshaping of the American presence and a new Middle East democracy initiative to prevent the country from slipping into anarchy.

There is a great sense of sadness among those of us who foresaw over 4 years ago the tragedy that is now unfolding in Iraq. The war that many assumed would be swift and certain now continues to rage, but I urge my fellow colleagues to take this day and all of the days forward to push for a change, beginning with an orderly withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. This approach will send a message to Iraqis that they must take more responsibility for their own security and would reduce the strain on our military forces. For that, we will not need a surge to the war to continue and continue surge after surge.

I thank you very much for the time.

Mr. HINCHEY. I thank my friend DONALD PAYNE from New Jersey for his leadership and for joining us this evening.

Mr. Speaker, the point that we have made here tonight is that perhaps at no time in the history of this country, except for perhaps our own Civil War, have we faced the kind of circumstances that we are presently being confronted with as a result of the way in which this administration incompetently and corruptly has led us into this illegal occupation in Iraq.

We need to correct these circumstances. It is the responsibility of this Congress to do so. We need to hold this administration accountable. It is the responsibility of this Congress to do so. We need to remove our military forces from Iraq in an appropriate and timely way. And it is the responsibility of this Congress to take that kind of leadership.

I thank my friends and colleagues for joining us here on this very important 4-year anniversary of the illegal attack and subsequent occupation of Iraq. We need now to change these circumstances.

OUR SOUTHERN BORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, today I discuss a black mark on this administration. And while I realize this is the fourth anniversary, and I have enjoyed the comments of colleagues, comments with which I may have some disagreement, I would like to discuss another issue. Because no matter what we do in Iraq, one way or the other, whether we succeed there or not, if our southern borders are not secure, if the southern borders are open to an invasion of illegal immigrants and open to an invasion of our country by terrorists and others who would do us harm and drug dealers and drug cartels, America is in great jeopardy. So no matter what is happening overseas, and I would grant you that the President may have made some mistakes and he may well have been well motivated, but his motives in determining the policy of what is happening at our southern borders is not what is in question. It is his actions. And what we have today is a dangerous threat to the safety of our people, the security of our country at our southern border.

□ 2215

Today I discuss a black mark on this administration in terms of the security of our country, a vile crime which has been committed against two law enforcement officers whose job it has been to protect our families and our communities by keeping control of America's borders. The sad episode started back on February 17, 2005, just another routine day for Border Patrol Agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Compean. Both were Border Patrol veterans with unblemished service records. Agent Ramos, in fact, had been nominated for Border Patrol Agent of the Year.

As they made their rounds that day 2 years ago, they checked on a tripped sensor near the border. Agent Compean discovered footprints and drag marks, the usual indication of a drug load being smuggled across the river. He spotted a vehicle, then radioed in the description and followed the suspect. The suspect realized that he had been spotted and turned around to rush back towards Mexico. Agent Ramos then observed the van driving at a very high rate of speed, and, after the driver ignored commands to pull over, Ramos gave chase.

By the way, according to the prosecuting attorney, pursuing a fleeing suspect without a supervisor's permission is against the Border Patrol policy. Now, get this. We are being told that just pursuing someone who has come across the border in a vehicle, without permission of a supervisor, is an illegal act, is against the rules for our Border Patrol agents. Whoever made that rule up? I wonder if the drug smugglers and the terrorists know about that rule?

The drug smuggler, then, in this particular instance, abandoned his vehicle and fled towards Mexico on foot, but he was intercepted by one of the agents, Agent Compean. Once again, ignoring several commands by Agent Compean to stop, a physical altercation ensued, with Compean ending up in the ditch.

Seeing his opportunity, the smuggler ran toward the border. According to Agent Compean's sworn statement, while running, the suspect turned and pointed something shiny with his left hand. Believing that his life was in danger, Agent Compean opens fire. Now, how long do you have to determine whether that is a gun in the man's hand as he runs away and aims something at you?

Hearing the gunshots, Agent Ramos came to the aid of his fellow officer. He, too, shouted for the smuggler to stop, but instead of obeying his command, the illegal drug smuggler once again turned and ran and, as he was running, again turned and pointed something shiny at Ramos, who at that moment shot his weapon once.

After disappearing into the banks of the Rio Grande, the smuggler reappeared on the Mexican side where he jumped into a waiting van, which was waiting for him. Obviously, an organized situation.

Unbeknownst to Officers Ramos and Compean, a bullet hit the illegal drug smuggler in the left buttocks. Other agents, including two supervisors, were nearby and could not see what was going on, but we have every reason to understand they heard the shots because they were that close.

When the abandoned van was examined, 743 pounds of marijuana were found. The payload was seized, and one would think that congratulations were in order. After all, Ramos and Compean were heroes, weren't they? They had been responsible for taking off the street $1 million worth of drugs bound for our communities. Good job, fellas, right? No. Wrong. Agents Ramos and Compean, not the illegal drug smuggler, are at this moment languishing in Federal prison, serving 11- to 12-year sentences, and, in fact, they are in solitary confinement.

This is the worst miscarriage of justice that I have seen in my 25 years of public service. It is a nightmare for the two Border Patrol agents who willingly risked their lives protecting us for 5 and 10 years. For their families, this is a hellish and destructive nightmare. They are losing everything.

And just today the Compean family was sent a letter signed by Attorney General Johnny Sutton, who prosecuted their loved one, their husband, asking for them to pay court costs of $2,800 while their husband has been sent away to prison and their family is being condemned to destitution, losing their health insurance, and then they get a letter asking for them to pay the court costs. I would offer this up for the RECORD.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE,
San Antonio, TX, March 14, 2007.

Re $2,800.00 and penalties and costs; Court No. EP05CR856(2); Judgment Date: October 23, 2006, USAO #2007Z00182/001

JOSE ALONSO COMPEAN,
El Paso, TX.

DEAR MR. COMPEAN: On the date listed above, you were ordered to pay the Court. The Financial Litigation Unit of the United States Attorney's Office is in charge of collecting your criminal debt. With the following exceptions, the amount you owe is due now and will be delinquent after 30 days. Delinquency may result in certain penalties being added to the debt pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §3612. Your cashier's check or money order, payable to the Clerk, U.S. District Court, should be mailed to the United States Clerk's Office, U.S. Courthouse, 511 E. San Antonio St., Room 350, El Paso, Texas 79901. Please note that personal checks are not accepted.

The exceptions to immediate payment in full are as follows:

The terms of your judgment provide otherwise, or

You have made an agreement with the Court or your probation officer, or

You have entered into a satisfactory repayment agreement with this office, or

You are presently incarcerated.

If you are presently incarcerated, you may begin paying on your debt through the Inmate Financial Responsibility Program. Regardless of the foregoing exceptions to immediate payment in full, please be advised that the United States may enforce the judgment for the full amount as provided by law.

If you have paid the debt in full, then please disregard this notice and notify the United States Attorney's Office immediately by returning a copy of this letter with a copy of the receipt(s).

Sincerely,

JOHNNY SUTTON,
United States Attorney.

To add insult to injury, a letter from U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton's office was sent on March 14 to the families, as I say, of both of these officers. And I have it right here, and let me read that to you, which I have just submitted for the RECORD.

Final Litigation Unit of the United State's Attorney's Office is in charge of collecting your criminal debt. The amount you owe is due now and will be delinquent after 30 days. Delinquency may result in certain penalties being added. Please be advised that the United States may enforce the judgment for the full amount as provided by law.

This is to a family of a law enforcement officer now who is languishing away in solitary confinement, and the family is being destroyed. Talk about cruelty.

The Compean family has already lost their home, and they have no health insurance, and now they receive a letter like this from the U.S. attorney.

I hope the American people are understanding the horror story that we are putting these two Border Patrol agents through. And our President knows about this. His protege, the U.S. attorney, knows about this, and I will tell you that, yes, Attorney General Gonzales knows about this.

So how come the agents were prosecuted and not the drug smuggler? Why is it that the Border Patrol agents have been treated so ruthlessly and without mercy by the U.S. attorney and by the Justice Department, and, yes, by the President of the United States?

The whole rotten episode has turned justice on its head. The book was thrown at heroes who protect us, while the drug smuggler got immunity. According to U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton, who was a longtime Bush appointee and protege, a friend of the President, Ramos and Compean are not heroes. In fact, he considers the two officers to be criminals, charging them with assault with serious bodily injury, assault with a deadly weapon, discharge of a firearm while committing a crime of violence, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years, and a civil rights violation. Sutton claims he had no choice but to prosecute the two Border Patrol agents because, according to Sutton, they broke the law. And when they violated procedures for discharging their weapons, they discharged their weapons at a fleeing suspect. That was not permitted.

The procedures were not followed, and that is true. They didn't know absolutely for sure he didn't have a gun. They thought he did. But where do we have rules saying that a Border Patrol

agent has to be shot and wounded before he can use his weapon?

Sutton could have granted immunity to law enforcement officers and thrown the book at the drug smuggler. That is what would have made sense. After all, these two law enforcement officers had a perfect, clean record. The drug smuggler was a drug smuggler.

But, instead, Johnny Sutton, our U.S. attorney, protege of the President, chose to side with the drug smuggler, and threw the book at the Border Patrol agents. This was totally discretionary on the part of Johnny Sutton, who continues to say he had no choice but to bring charges against the Border Patrol agents. No, he could have given the immunity for a lack of procedure to the Border Patrol agents and thrown the book at the drug dealer. This was an indefensible decision, and now Sutton lies to us with the suggestion that he didn't have a choice to prosecute.

So how does this incident then mushroom into this matter of the ultimate and utter destruction of the lives of these two Border Patrol agents and their families? After the incident, the drug smuggler, also known as Aldrete-Davila, contacted Rene Sanchez, a childhood friend, for advice. Why did he call Rene Sanchez? Because Sanchez is a current Border Patrol agent in Arizona. Now, instead of turning in this drug smuggler, even though he was a friend, an old, longtime friend, he didn't turn in the drug smuggler. He went to the authorities, and this law enforcement officer, who was sworn to uphold the laws of the United States, chose to intervene on the behalf of his childhood friend who was smuggling drugs, a mule for the drug cartel. He was also called as a character witness, this same man, on the drug smuggler's behalf during the trial in which he described how the drug smuggler actually was a very fine and decent man.

Well, Mr. Sanchez contacted the Department of Homeland Security, who, in turn, decided to open an investigation into the conduct of Ramos and Compean. What? A drug smuggler with 750 pounds of narcotics is thwarted from making his delivery and then complains he was shot at, and our government decides to investigate the law enforcement officers? Something is really wrong with this picture.

Mr. Sutton had every chance to focus his enormous prosecutorial powers on the drug dealer. He chose to target the enforcement officers because maybe they weren't following procedure. He chose to turn a possible procedural violation by the Border Patrol agents into a criminal act, rather than prosecuting a career drug smuggler.

As part of their investigation, the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General sent Special Agent Christopher Sanchez, which is no relation to the other fellow, into Mexico, and this fellow offered the drug smuggler immunity, an immunity deal in exchange for his testimony against the Border Patrol agents. The smuggler was then brought back into the United States, given free medical care for his injuries, all at taxpayer expense.

One wonders at the outcome and what would have happened if Mr. Sutton would have spent one-tenth the effort trying to find this criminal and trying to demand his extradition and punishment for smuggling narcotics into our country, rather than focusing on our law enforcement officers who are there to protect us and trying to find a way to bring them down.

The drug smuggler was portrayed by this U.S. attorney as the victim. He was portrayed that to the jury and to the public as the victim because the drug smuggler swears he wasn't armed, and, of course, the U.S. attorney took the word of the drug smuggler rather than the law enforcement agents that he wasn't armed. Sure, a drug smuggler has $1 million worth of drugs and he is not armed.

The jury is told that Davila was just trying to raise money to buy medicine for his sick mother, and he had never smuggled drugs before. So the U.S. attorney made that claim to the jury and painted the worst possible picture of Ramos and Compean.

Then our government takes the word of this nefarious drug-dealing character over two law enforcement officers, again portraying that to the jury as what they believed to be the case.

In short, the initial decision to prosecute the two Border Patrol agents instead of the drug smuggler was indefensible. And then our U.S. attorney moved forward with a vigor to beat these two men down, perhaps just to protect a wrong decision.

Well, Mr. Sutton's only defense of this wrong decision is to cover up the horrendous decision. And how did he do that? He has to demonize the two Border Patrol agents and has to make sure they get the maximum penalty.

But this doesn't meet the smell test. Anyone who comes close to this case knows it stinks. According to the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General's report, which includes Agent Compean's sworn statement that he repeatedly stated that he believed that the drug smuggler had a weapon, and that he felt threatened, the Border Patrol training allows for the use of deadly force when an agent fears imminent bodily injury or death. The two officers said that under oath. Both officers testified they saw Aldrete-Davila turn and point what they believed to be a weapon at them while he was running away.

The wound created by the bullet in this man corroborates the agents' version of events. During the trial, an Army doctor, a prosecution witness, I might add, testified that the drug smuggler's body was bladed away from the bullet that struck him. That is consistent with the motion of a left-handed person running while pointing backwards, causing the body to twist, once again corroborating Ramos' and Compean's belief that the smuggler had a weapon in his hand.

Later, the drug dealer's family, and this is really important; later the drug dealer's family verified to a news reporter that he always carried a gun and that he had been making deliveries of drugs for a long time.

□ 2230

That, of course, never made it into the trial or to the jury.

It is important to understand that only three individuals were eyewitnesses to the crucial events of that day: the two accused border agents and a self-admitted drug smuggler. The other Border Patrol agents who responded to the scene and perhaps heard some of the shots testified under immunity and contradicted themselves several times on the witness stand. And why did that happen? What was the problem there?

Most importantly, when we are looking at this, we know that their view of events was completely obscured. They did not see what was going on, these other agents, the supervisors, because there was a 12-foot-high berm on the edge of a levee right across from an access road where all this was happening. None of the other agents could have seen what transpired on the other side of this berm. Well, they heard the shots; yet these agents, these same agents, two of them at least who were the supervisors of Ramos and Compean, were threatened that if they didn't testify against Ramos and Compean, they would be prosecuted themselves. Is this intimidation?

The fact is these two supervisors didn't make a report on the incident. They didn't ask Ramos and Compean about the incident. It wasn't Ramos and Compean who falsified a report. They were never asked by their supervisors because no one wanted to fill out 5 hours' worth of paperwork. And then in comes the U.S. attorney making this a criminal offense.

Well, it begs the question of why the two supervisors needed immunity before they could testify. Why is it that they needed immunity? If they weren't involved in the incident, why were they offered immunity? Well, they were given immunity by Johnny Sutton because he was threatening them. He was threatening, you either do this, or you are the one who is going to be prosecuted for not filing a report on this shooting incident. This calls into question what effect this all had on the truthfulness of their testimony.

The U.S. attorney's version of what happened that day relies almost exclusively on the testimony of the drug smuggler. We are talking about what happened firsthand. The other people were across and didn't see it. They heard noises. According to the Department of Homeland Security investigation, the supervisors heard or knew about the shooting. That is in the report of the Department of Homeland Security investigation.

So the supervisors heard or knew about the shooting; yet they did not ask Ramos and Compean about it because why? Because they were trying to cover something up? No. Because they didn't want to do 5 hours' worth of paperwork on their own time. And Johnny Sutton, our U.S. attorney, turned that into a felony, attacking our law enforcement officers and letting the drug dealer go, focusing on our law enforcement officers, trying to find anything he can do to get them and bring them down and anything he can do to protect the drug dealer.

Well, it was their duty, meaning the supervisors who were threatened by Sutton, to change their testimony. It was their duty, not the field agents', to write a report about this incident. That is probably what he used to hang over their head: You were the ones who were supposed to write the report. If you didn't, they must have kept this information from you.

It was never brought up even though they were right there. As a matter of fact, the agents that we are talking about, Ramos and Compean, and all agents that are on the border there, are prohibited by Border Patrol policy from filing a written report on a shooting. INS firearms policy section 12(b), 1(g) states: ''Ensure that supervisory personnel or investigative officers are aware that employees involved in a shooting incident shall not be required or allowed to submit a written statement of the circumstances surrounding the incident.'' So Ramos and Compean were not permitted to file a written report, and the supervisors didn't file it, and so Johnny Sutton went after the supervisors and threatened them in order to get them to testify against Ramos and Compean. After all, why then would he have to grant them immunity otherwise?

''All written statements regarding the incident,'' a shooting incident, ''shall be prepared by the local investigating officers and shall be based upon an interview of the employees.''

So here you have Ramos and Compean prohibited from writing their own report. Yet Johnny Sutton continues to claim that the officers filed a false report to cover up their crime; not to cover up that they were not following the right procedures, but to cover up a crime. The supervisors knew about the shooting. They didn't ask Ramos and Compean what had happened, because once they did, it would have required 5 hours of additional paperwork. And because the guy got away, they didn't know that he had been wounded. They just assumed that the incident was closed.

So now because people who were just trying not to have to do 5 hours' worth of paperwork, officers who risk their lives for us every day are being brought down and their lives destroyed because of that, and the drug dealers go free.

By no means did anyone's action raise to the level of criminality. What might be considered unauthorized discharge of a weapon, because, let us face it, Ramos and Compean, again, couldn't prove absolutely that they knew the drug dealer had a weapon, and, of course, if he did and they were wrong, they would be shot, and they would be dead, well, they can't prove it absolutely; so that has been turned into attempted murder by the U.S. attorney.

Again, the agents thought the drug smuggler was pointing something at them. Their story has never changed. They testified to this in court. The drug smuggler had just been in a physical altercation with one of the officers. Of course, the U.S. attorney believed the drug dealer, who swears that Compean just fell down. He believes the drug dealer when he said, ''I didn't have a gun.'' You have to believe the drug dealer because he was the only one on the scene and he got away, although his family has told reporters that he always carried a gun. And it does make sense that someone who carries a million dollars' worth of drugs would be armed.

So even though the Department of Homeland Security Office of Investigation determined that all seven officers on the scene knew about or had heard about the shooting, the U.S. attorney granted those officers immunity, which, now, why did he have to do that if they were just going to tell the truth? To testify against Ramos and Compean. There must have been a threat there: If you don't testify this way, well, I am not going to grant you immunity, which means I can charge you with a crime. So, remember, it is the supervisors' job, not the agents', Ramos and Compean, to fill out the written report.

So this leads to the logical conclusion that these witnesses were intimidated into testifying. Our U.S. Attorney's Office intimidated witnesses. They were threatened and then given immunity if they went along. If this incident would have been kept in perspective, this whole shooting incident, and, yes, if the weapons were discharged without justification, and, still, when you think someone is aiming a gun at you, that is justification, but at the very worst, if all supervisors and agents were failing to report a shooting, that may or may not have been consistent with the regulations governing the discharge of weapons. Maybe that was a violation of procedure, that those supervisors, along with those two Border Patrol agents, should have worked those extra 5 hours and filed that report. And do you know what would have happened? They would have been disciplined, and that would have been the end of it. The penalty for not reporting a shooting is a 5-day suspension.

This was an issue of procedural violation maybe, not criminality, and there is a serious question about the viability of those mandated procedures that we are talking about that you have got to really keep your gun holstered even when you are going up against drug dealers and you are going up against terrorists.

Of course, we have an insane border policy which has resulted in an open border in which terrorists and drug dealers think they can just come across the border, and this was even before Ramos and Compean, and we have had an invasion of millions of illegal immigrants across the southern border, and that border policy now is destroying the lives of the only people who are there trying to defend us.

Over 90 Members of Congress have expressed concern, if not outrage, at the many troubling aspects of this case. Our repeated attempts for Presidential intervention have gone ignored or rebuffed. Our pleas to keep the officers out on bond pending appeal fell on deaf ears. Instead, the President dug in his heels and sent Tony Snow out to chastise our efforts to save Ramos and Compean by suggesting, in the President's words, take a closer look at the facts in the case since these men were convicted by a jury.

Johnny Sutton went on public airwaves and lied to the public to discredit the agents. How many times have we heard they shot an unarmed man in the back as he was running away? He wasn't shot in the back. He was shot in the side, in the buttocks, as he was aiming something at the officers. He wasn't just a man. He was a drug smuggler. He wasn't someone who happened across the border.

It has been discovered that the Homeland Security Department lied to Congress and then covered up their lies because this was all part of the effort by this administration to demonize the two law enforcement officers, to cover up their horrendous mistake and decision in prosecuting them in the first place, but, of course, also trying to keep the lid on the fact that there is a disaster happening in American security to our southern border. And this case, of course, brings attention to the failure of this administration to protect our national security and leaving us totally vulnerable at our southern border.

So even today the Department of Homeland Security released an official statement by IG Skinner, and this statement, which I will also add for the RECORD, is filled with misinformation and inaccuracies about the facts of this case.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD L. SKINNER, INSPECTOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY REGARDING THE INVESTIGATION OF FORMER BORDER PATROL AGENTS IGNACIO RAMOS AND JOSE COMPEAN

Remarks by certain Members of Congress as reported in the media have stated that members of my staff lied to Congress. At a hearing before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on February 8, 2007, I stated, in part, the following:

The decision to prosecute former Border Patrol Agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Compean was made by the Department of Justice, not by my Office. My Office conducted the investigation in coordination with the United States Attorneys' Office.

I stand by the work of my Office. Our investigators did an outstanding job and I fully support their work.

At no time did any member of my staff lie to Congress about the investigation of Mr. Ramos and Mr. Compean or any other matter. My staff has acted honestly and in good faith.

In a closed Members' briefing on September 26, 2006, my staff reported that Mr. Compean had said that he and Mr. Ramos had stated that they ''wanted to shoot a Mexican.'' My staff reported this statement to me, and then reported it to Representative Michael McCaul and other Members and their staff during the closed briefing. Representative McCaul was then serving as Chair of the Subcommittee on Investigations of the House Homeland Security Committee. At the time my staff made that statement, they believed it to be true, although we later learned it was inaccurate. In fact, Mr. Compean had stated in a sworn statement that ''my intent was to kill the alien. . .and I think Nacho [Ramos] was also trying to kill the alien.'' The alien Mr. Compean and Mr. Ramos attempted to kill, Mr. Olsvaldo Aldrete-Davila, had come from Mexico and escaped back into Mexico.

The statement that Mr. Ramos and Mr. Compean supposedly ''wanted to shoot a Mexican'' never was reported in any document by my office or by the Department of Justice, and was not introduced at the trial of Mr. Ramos and Mr. Compean, which had been completed on March 8, 2006, six months prior to the briefing. That statement also was not reported by my office to anyone other than then Chairman McCaul and the other Members and their staff in attendance at the closed briefing.

The briefing my office provided to then Chairman McCaul and the other Members was initiated at his request in his capacity as Chair of the Subcommittee on Investigations.

Mr. McCaul and the other Members understood that the information my office was providing was not public, and was not to be made public—it was For Official Use Only for the Committee's use in discharging its official business.

At the time my staff tried to accommodate then Chairman McCaul by providing an oral briefing, we did not have the benefit of a trial transcript or even a written report of investigation. Consequently, my staff made some misstatements during the briefing, but nothing that affected the investigation, the trial, the convictions or the sentencings of Mr. Ramos and Mr. Compean.

The only reason the statement that Mr. Ramos and Mr. Compean allegedly said they ''wanted to shoot a Mexican'' has become public is because the terms under which my office briefed the Members have not been honored. Others have publicized that inaccurate information and reported it to the media. That information was not used at trial nor in the sentencing of Mr. Compean or Mr. Ramos.

The evidence that was introduced at trial proved that Mr. Compean and Mr. Ramos attempted to shoot Mr. Aldrete-Davila in the back while he was unarmed and running away from them.

Evidence introduced at trial proved that when Mr. Compean and Mr. Ramos attempted to shoot Mr. Aldrete-Davila in the back, they did not know that he had been attempting to smuggle marijuana into this country.

Evidence introduced at trial proved that when Mr. Compean and Mr. Ramos attempted to shoot Mr. Aldrete-Davila in the back, they did not even know that he was in this country illegally.

At no time did Mr. Compean and Mr. Ramos warn their fellow Border Patrol Agents that they believed Mr. Aldrete-Davila might be armed. Consequently, other Border Patrol agents walked around in the open where they were exposed, rather than taking cover or other precautions.

After shooting Mr. Aldrete-Davila in the buttocks, Mr. Compean and Mr. Ramos made no attempt to arrest him, thus allowing him to escape back into Mexico. Rather than try to arrest Mr. Aldrete-Davila, Mr. Compean picked up the spent shell casings and threw them away and instructed another agent to do the same. Neither Mr. Compean nor Mr. Ramos reported the shooting incident to their supervisor, though required to do so.

In conclusion, I am deeply disturbed that these allegations have been made regarding the integrity of my staff I reiterate my staff acted honestly and in good faith at all times.

And let me note, despite the administration's repeated claims that Ramos and Compean were convicted by a jury of their peers, it is important to note that the jury didn't hear so many of the facts that were important for them to come to the truth in this issue.

Finally, after 11 months, the completed trial transcripts of their trial were made available. So for 11 months we haven't even been able to see the transcript of this trial. And here we have the Department of Homeland Security telling us that when they were giving a briefing to Members of Congress, one of the Members of Congress who is the chairman of an oversight subcommittee, that they had made misstatements, and then this document itself is filled with misstatements. One wonders about the sincerity and the professionalism of the people in this administration in this very volatile issue dealing with border control. Something is amiss. Something is causing the system to go askew.

Federal District Judge Kathleen Cordone, another Bush appointee, I might add, would not permit critically important aspects of this case to be introduced during the trial. She did this at the request of the prosecution. For example, she would not allow any reference to describing the dangerous conditions of the border. Essentially the jury was supposed to imagine that the shooting took place in a completely sterile environment where the likelihood of Border Patrol agents confronting armed drug smugglers was not a plausible scenario.

Well, that is absurd. And a recent headline in the Washington Times is a perfect example. It states: ''Officers Outgunned on the Border.'' The reporter describes in great detail the unprecedented surge in violence along our borders fueled by heavily armed illegal gangs who patrol those areas in order to protect their criminal enterprises; yet this judge didn't think it was important for the jury to find out that these Border Patrol agents were working in extreme danger every day. And thus when they thought they saw him turning around and aiming something at them, would that be justified?

It might not be justified if you are in downtown USA in some very peaceful town someplace around the country, or at some school or church or maybe even in a courtroom, but when you are on the border, and you are off on your own, and you are confronting this type of challenge, yes, if someone is pointing something at you, and you realize he has just escaped, that he has been in an altercation with one of the officers, and then later, of course, we find out that he was a drug dealer, yes, there was every reason for them to be concerned that he might have a weapon and shoot them.

□ 2245

In fact, his family, again has told a reporter, he was armed many times when he went out, and he was someone who had done this many times before, drug smuggling, that is. So perhaps the most troubling omission from the trial, again, was about the drug smuggler himself.

Already under immunity for smuggling $1 million worth of drugs into the country on that day of the shooting, Davila was involved with a second drug smuggling incident in the months later after the first incidents. In October of 2005, he again was part of another drug smuggling incident. According to sensitive DEA documents obtained by my office, the government's star witness against Ramos and Campeon was ID'd as the driver of a van filled with another 750 pounds of marijuana seized during a joint DEA-Border Patrol operation on October 23, 2005. This was only 6 months after he had been intercepted by Ramos and Campeon.

So instead of doing the right thing and throwing the case out because their star witness has proven to be an awful, dreadful human being, a professional drug dealer, instead of throwing the case out, no, the U.S. Attorney chose to ignore this information; not only ignore it, but to pressure everyone in the trial to make sure that this information that their primary witness, the guy who they are portraying as a man who had never done this before, and was simply raising money for medicine for his mother, that the information he was involved in yet another drug operation was never disclosed. The U.S. Attorney did everything he could to make sure that was not disclosed to the jury or the public.

Johnny Sutton has lied to the American people about this. Every time he was asked questions about it, he would give an answer that sounded like he was saying no, there was no second incident. But if you examine the words, that is not what he was saying. He was, as unscrupulous lawyers often do, saying one thing, but making people think that he was saying something else. He was lying without actually having to be technically lying.

So, what happened? We have their prime witness now involved in another drug deal operation, and the U.S. Attorney pressures the judge to not permit anything about the second incident to become known to the jury. They

said ''Mr. Davila is not on trial.'' The prosecutor then insisted that the defense could not even question Davila about a second incident. Unfortunately, the judge went along with the prosecution in this case and then ruled that just because the star witness had been arrested again for drug dealing, that that was not relevant to this case. A gag order was placed on anyone involved in the case so no information open the second drug smuggling incident could ever reach the jury.

So the jury wasn't allowed to hear that the drug dealer's commission of a second offense while he was waiting for that trial had taken place. We are talking about the credibility of the primary witness against Ramos and Campeon.

His credibility is not relevant? The jury shouldn't know that this is not just a man who is raising money for the medicine for his mother, that that is not who he is. Who he really is is a professional drug cartel mule who did this often and was arrested again after he had been given immunity by our government, and a pass, I might add, to go in and out of our country?

The jury also never heard that Christopher Sanchez, the Department of Homeland Security investigator who took Davila, took him and the removed bullet fragment, which had been removed from him, this Department of Homeland Security investigator took him to his personal residence for a night after he was released from an American hospital which got this bullet fragment out and the bullet fragment was in his possession. So we have a negligent action that broke the chain of custody for this vital piece of evidence.

What we are talking about here is something that any lawyer can tell you is the type of sloppiness that taints evidence and disqualifies it from being used by the prosecution. That wasn't permitted to be told to the jury.

What is going on? Our Border Patrol agents make one possible procedural mistake in the field in an instantaneous reaction to a man who might be shooting at them, and the book is thrown at them. ''You make any mistake and we are going to squash you like a bug.'' But when they make a mistake about breaking the chain of evidence and actually taking a witness putting them in a prosecutor's home, totally violating procedures and tainting the prosecutorial case, well, those mistakes in procedure are just ignored. They are just ignored.

Why is it that the two heroes who are protecting us with their bodies every day of their life have the book thrown at them, and if they can possibly turn a mistake into a felony, they are destroyed; but the U.S. Attorney's Office, if they make a mistake, or the Department of Homeland Security, which now admits that they made misstatements to a group of Congressmen investigating this issue, and then I might add for 4 months covered up the fact they had made those misstatements, why is it all forgotten and forgiven on one side, but yet our defenders have to have the book thrown at them? Why is the government bending over backwards to accommodate and protect a professional drug mule?

Our government went to Mexico, sought out the drug smuggler, granted him immunity, issued a border crossing card and provided him free healthcare, all at America's expense, and now the fellow thinks he is going to sue the U.S. Government for $5 million.

Perhaps most perplexing is the fact that three of the 12 jurors in the trial of Ramos and Campeon later submitted sworn affidavits alleging that they had been misled by the jury foreman into believing that if the majority of jurors voted for a conviction, they had to go along and vote guilty, even though they thought the defendants were innocent.

That is right. These are unsophisticated jurors, not very well educated people, but regular human beings; intelligent, but not educated in the ways of the law. They were told by the foreman of the jury that hung juries would not be allowed. The three jurors said, and they have signed written affidavits, that they felt pressured to vote guilty. One of them said, ''Had we had the option of a hung jury, I truly believe the outcome may have been different.''

Another juror said, ''I think I might not have changed my vote to guilty had I known that a hung jury was an option. I did not think the defendants were guilty of the assaults or the civil rights violations.''

The judge, again at the urging of the prosecutor, denied a request that the two agents that we are talking about, Ramos and Campeon, be permitted to remain free on bond until the appeal could be heard. Common criminals are permitted to stay out on bond until their appeal is heard, but not these two Border Patrol agents.

I stand before you, Mr. Speaker. Here we are, and right now as we are speaking Border Patrol agents Ignacio Ramos and Campeon are languishing in solitary confinement in Federal prisons as a direct result of the mean-spirited, ruthless prosecution that was brought upon them by our Justice Department and with the backing of the President of the United States.

Ramos and Campeon were ripped away from their families on January 17, 2007, and forced to begin serving their unjust 11 and 12 year prison sentences all because our own Federal Government chose to take the word of a drug smuggler and give him immunity and take his word over that of two law enforcement officers and throw the book at them, even though those two law enforcement officers had put their lives on the line to protect the borders of the United States, protect our families and our communities for 5 and 10 years, risking their lives for us.

I, along with a dozen other Members, signed on to a letter requesting that the Justice Department release the officers on bond pending their appeal. As I say, it is a courtesy often afforded common criminals.

And, yes, Ramos was severely beaten in prison, and thus we knew that their lives were in danger for them to be in this prison and there was a reason to let them be out on appeal. Yet the Justice Department chose to ignore the pleas of Members of Congress and the pleas for mercy of the families, and the agents were denied bond.

I might add that after a lengthy delay, I finally received a letter from the Justice Department claiming to have no choice but to deny bond. By the way, this was the Justice Department's letter to me. I received it just today telling me why they couldn't give these two, Ramos and Campeon, bond and let them out on bond while they are do going through their appeal.

They really have to be very specific and they have to follow all the rules. They have to be exactly right in what they are doing. Except, of course, they address the letter to ''Congresswoman Rohrabacher.'' Congresswoman Rohrabacher. Well, if they can't get that right, why are they playing with the lives of Ramos and Campeon? If they can't get that right, why is it that if Ramos and Campeon make a little mistake in their procedure, that they get the book thrown at them?

Also let me note this ''Congresswoman Rohrabacher'' letter to me from the Justice Department is just another example of the contempt that this administration has demonstrated time and again for congressional oversight and congressional concerns.

This Attorney General, this President, has time and again, instead of treating the legislative branch as something that deserves the respect that we do deserve, as the presidency deserves, time and again we have been shown contempt. We have had people in communicating to us, we put questions in to the Attorney General and get calls back from people four or five layers down. Here we are getting an answer back from someone who doesn't even know that I am not a ''Congresswoman Rohrabacher.'' Yes, that is contempt, and they will pay the price for that contempt.

Our pleas as Members of Congress were not unfounded. Members warned the administration that Ramos and Campeon faced imminent danger once they entered the respective Federal correctional facilities. Not only were they not properly protected, Agent Ramos was placed in a facility known to be infiltrated by illegal Mexican gang members, and within 8 days of his arrival, Agent Ramos was savagely beaten by five of those illegal Mexican gang members.

Instead of sending him to a minimum security prison or letting him be out on bond, the administration decided to make an example of him. They wouldn't even send him to a minimum security prison where he would be safe.

Instead, the Justice Department chose to keep him at this dangerous facility where he had already been beaten. And Agent Ramos, even as we speak, has been in solitary confinement for 45 days and counting. Solitary confinement. Locked in a cell 23 hours a day, telephone privileges limited to one call of 15 minutes every 30 days, and no interaction with other inmates. Mr. Campeon is suffering the same fate.

The Bureau of Prisons uses the euphemism to describe their incarceration as ''special housing for their own protection.'' Make no mistake about it, they are in solitary confinement, a unit designed as a punitive measure, not a protective measure. Ramos and Campeon, two brave Border Patrol agents, are suffering a fate not even bestowed upon murderers and drug dealers. This amounts to cruel and unusual punishment, intentional cruel and unusual punishment.

These two agents could have been sent to a minimum security prison where they would be safe. We actually asked the President, through back channels, personally, just go to the judge and support the effort to let them out on bond until the appeal is heard. The next day, it was announced that no, the administration officially opposes any letting them out on bond.

Well, basically, that was sending a message to everyone who patrols our borders. He sent the message to every Border Patrol agent when he said not only are you going to be prosecuted, but you will be destroyed, you will be obliterated, you will be smashed like a bug if you get in the way of what we want to happen down at the border.

President Bush has essentially dismantled our ability to control America's southern border. Any agent who gets in the way will be squashed, as I have said. So much for the President's compassion. So much for his talk about Christian charity. Ramos and Campeon are languishing in solitary confinement. They are being brutalized. There is cruel and unusual punishment being dealt out to them because they dared challenge the President.

□ 2300

I don't want to hear anything more about compassion from a man who lets that happen to our brave defenders, and then focuses us on a far-away war while letting terrorists and drug dealers penetrate our southern border.

Since January 17, when the propaganda machine and smear campaign against Compean and Ramos was fully unleashed by the President, by Tony Snow, and his protege, the U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton, more questions than answers have arisen. Both Tony Snow and Johnny Sutton smugly lectured the American people and Members of Congress to ''take a closer look at this case.'' And as the President said in his own words, ''Take a sober look at this case.''

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have closely examined this case, and maybe it would behoove the President to take some advice and to look at this case honestly.

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton, who is probably briefing the President, has his own personal life tied up in this. He is not an unbiased source of information about this case, just as Attorney General Gonzales is not. They have already advised the President in a horrendous way and started him down the road to the situation where he is at today.

John Sutton prosecuted the good guys and gave immunity to the bad guys. He could have done it the other way around, but he didn't. He chose to prosecute the good guys and give immunity to the bad guys. Sutton has continually engaged in a propaganda campaign aimed at creating a prejudicial public view against Agents Ramos and Compean. He has repeatedly stated that ''these corrupt agents shot an unarmed man in the back.'' This is not true.

The prosecution's own witness, an Army surgeon, testified that the bullet hit Adrete-Davila in the buttocks, not in the back. And, of course, he was turned in a way that the bullet entered indicating he was aiming something backwards. And, of course, this was not just a man in the back. It was not a nun or some tourist who happened to stray across the border. It was a professional drug smuggler who works for a drug cartel, a mule, a deliveryman for drugs, bringing dangerous substances into our neighborhoods in order to threaten our schools and our children.

Remember, since the drug smuggler absconded into Mexico, there was no way to know whether he was armed or not, yet Sutton chose to believe the drug smuggler who said he was not armed, even those the smuggler's own family members say he has been smuggling drugs since he was 14 and was ''always armed.''

So there is no question that he was a member of a drug cartel, but Johnny Sutton takes the drug smuggler's word over the law enforcement agents', and he portrays the drug smuggler to the jury in a dishonest way and keeps from them information that would expose the drug dealer as a professional drug dealer and not as he was portrayed before the jury.

Johnny Sutton turned the drug dealer in front of the jury into a victim. He was just trying to raise money for medicine for his dear mother and had never done drugs before. Sutton turned reality on its head. He sided with the drug smuggler over two men who risk their lives every day to protect us.

So now they must be destroyed to protect the mistake that was made not only in prosecuting them, but the mistakes that are made in policy down at the border that are putting our country at risk. These two Border Patrol agents are being destroyed to protect Sutton's failure. They are being destroyed to protect Gonzales' job, and they are being destroyed to protect the President's legacy, because all of those are at stake if the people learn the truth about what is happening on our border, and what the Ramos-Compean prosecution is all about.

Sutton vilifies helpless Border Patrol agents like these guys who get in the way every chance he gets. Just ask David Sipe, Gary Brugman and Gilmer Hernandez, all law enforcement officers who have been prosecuted by Johnny Sutton.

What we are talking about with Ramos and Compean is not only a sin against these men, not only a message to all our Border Patrol agents, but part of a pattern that is going on in which this administration is trying to cower our protectors, our law enforcement officers, from enforcing the law at our border, leaving us totally exposed.

The lies are evident. For example, Johnny Sutton continually refers to Ramos and Compean as corrupt agents. Well, again, why is our U.S. attorney out speaking on radio calling them corrupt agents? There weren't any charges of corruption. In fact, I have looked through this, there has never been a charge of corruption against either of these men. Yet the U.S. attorney is out in the mass media saying they were corrupt Border Patrol agents. They have never been charged with corruption because they have a totally clean work record.

Yes, Ramos had some family problems years ago, not part of his job, and Mr. Sutton, of course, has chosen to bring that personal matter up in order to vilify Mr. Ramos. But in terms of that, everybody understands you can have family problems. This had nothing to do with his job. In fact, Ramos had been nominated for Border Patrol Agent of the Year, and there is no corruption, yet Johnny Sutton lies and says these corrupt Border Patrol agents.

Johnny Sutton, when asked whether there was a second incident, lies and says something that makes it sound like there wasn't a second incident. But in reality his words are just technically not a lie, but what he is presenting is an untruth. That is what unscrupulous lawyers do.

What is the real significance of this case? The U.S. Attorney's despicable prosecution of these Border Patrol agents has put Border Patrol agents on notice: Any use of force to protect America, to secure our borders, and you will go to prison, and your life will be destroyed.

The consequences for Ramos and Compean in this case extend far beyond the destruction of these two men and their families. Yes, it is horrible that these families are being driven into destitution, and now they add insult to injury, sending them a bill. The Compeans have lost their home. There are three kids in that family, and they do not have health insurance, and their lives are being shattered, and Johnny Sutton sends them a bill to rub their nose in the fact that their father is in prison in solitary confinement.

But what are the consequences of this to all of us? These families are being destroyed, but there are more American lives at risk. Our southern border is open not just to an invading army of illegal immigrants, but, yes, to drug dealers like the ones like Ramos and Compean confronted, and, yes, to terrorists.

What if it was found that that van that Davila was in turned out not to possess a million dollars' worth of drugs, but instead it was a dirty bomb in that van; and if that drug dealer wasn't a Mexican, but instead turned out to be an Arab terrorist on the way to a target in the United States? Well, these two men, instead of being in solitary confinement, they would be invited to the White House and be congratulated and be made heroes.

Now there is a bigger agenda here. There is a hidden agenda here at play with the Ramos and Compean prosecution. The American people have a right to know who gave the order to go ahead to prosecute Ramos and Compean in the first place. I am sure Gonzales was in on it, and we need to know that. We also need to know as this case progressed where the President and Mr. Gonzales played a role in making decisions as to where they would be imprisoned, and if they would get out on bail during the time of appeal.

How did an incident that could have easily been resolved through an administrative reprimand within the Border Patrol itself spiral into charging them with attempted murder and a civil rights violation? According to a memo dealing with a meeting between four members of the Texas delegation and representatives of the Department of Homeland Security investigating team, the Mexican Consulate contacted the U.S. Attorney's Office on March 4, 2005, the same day this investigation began.

It seems to fit a disturbing pattern with all of these other prosecutions that the administration has moved forward with.

In the Gilmer Hernandez case, the Mexican Consulate sent 17 letters to our government demanding prosecution. In the Gary Brugman case, the Mexican consul sat in the courtroom during the trial, and Johnny Sutton went so far as to thank him for his assistance in locating the illegals Sutton used to testify against Brugman.

This stinks. We need to get to the bottom of this and find out if a foreign government is having an undue influence on prosecutorial decisions of our own law enforcement agencies and members. This subject of whether there is some type of foreign involvement, meaning the Mexican Government, in prosecutorial decisions here of our own law enforcement officials, that is now going to be looked into by the International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight Subcommittee of which I am the ranking member. Chairman DELAHUNT has stated that we will be holding hearings into this subject. There will be hearings of our oversight subcommittee to explore the pattern of questionable foreign influence on our government's decisions to prosecute law enforcement officers in the United States, especially those law enforcement officers who are trying to stop drug dealers who are coming in from Mexico, and stop the invasion of illegal immigrants who are pouring into our country from Mexico.

□ 2310

The Mexican government is having an undue influence on the decision of our government prosecutors in order to make concessions to the Mexican government. If our government is actually prosecuting people who do not deserve to be prosecuted, the American people have a right to know what political decisions are being made in coming forward with these indefensible prosecutions.

Did Ramos and Campean make mistakes? Maybe. Should they have been punished and reprimanded for them? Maybe. Should they have been charged with a crime? Absolutely not. By doing so, the Justice Department has demoralized our Nation's defenders on our southern border.

These are the facts. These are the facts that have engaged the public, causing Americans to wonder what in God's name is going on with our government, with our President. What is their President thinking? How could our President be as mean-spirited and arrogant as to not hear the pleas of so many citizens and to hear the pleas for mercy from the families of Ramos and Campean.

Yes, there is a hidden agenda here. Powerful economic interests want cheap labor. They want an open border. They want illegals who work cheap and who will depress the wages of working Americans, but the out-of-control flow of illegal immigrants is a nightmare at this moment for the American people.

This administration and past administrations and policy-makers and big corporate interests in Washington are so far out of touch and do not understand the reality of what is going on with this issue, and they do not care about the suffering of the American people. These elites, they do not care that illegal immigrants are pulling down the quality of our health care, shutting down emergency rooms. They do not care that they are undermining the quality of education by overcrowding our classrooms. They do not care that they are driving down the wages of middle class working people. They do not care if our criminal justice system is being stretched to the breaking point, that American citizens are now being victimized and murder and raped and robbed by criminal illegal aliens every day.

The only heroes in this entire system on which ordinary Americans depend are those in the thin green line of the border patrol. The elites have turned against our heroes, our defenders. They smashed two of them to warn the others what will happen to any patriot who actually is trying to protect our southern border and stop the criminal illegal aliens from entering our country.

This case shows why a guest worker program or amnesty program is not even remotely feasible until we can control our southern border. This is a country that cannot or refuses not to stop these illegal aliens that are pouring into our country. This country's policy has not stopped this invasion of our country, and if we do not do this and we do not support those who are protecting us in our southern border, there will be a price to pay.

On 9/11 we suffered a huge loss when people flew airplanes into buildings, but when it is fully understood, and I am sure the message has gone out not just to our border patrol agents but to the drug dealers and the terrorists throughout the world about what the situation is on our southern border, we could end up with a catastrophe in the making. We need to protect our southern border. We need to protect it because that is the protection that we can give to our communities, to our families.

Those border patrol agents, that thin green line of individuals who risk their lives for us, they are our first and last line of defense between chaos and mayhem and murder and the lives of our families.

I would ask that all of us make sure that we let everyone know, our elected officials and the executive branch, the President as well as Members of Congress, know how strongly we feel that Ramos and Campean should be pardoned and that we should protect our southern border and make sure the United States remains safe and secure.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today.

Mr. KANJORSKI (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for the week of March 19.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of attending a funeral.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DOGGETT, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, for 5 minutes, today.