

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 12, 2007

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, once again the new majority in the U.S. House of Representatives is calling on President Bush to change direction in Iraq and take the steps necessary to bring America's servicemen and women home from an Iraqi civil war we should not be fighting. The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, H.R. 2956, is legislation that directs the President to commence redeploying U.S. troops with April 1, 2008, as a target date for completion of the transition. I strongly support H.R. 2956 and would like to commend the efforts of Chairman SKELTON and his staff for the leadership to bring this bill before the House.

It is clear that the majority of Members of this House, the overwhelming majority of Americans, and most of the world recognize that the on-going war in Iraq has been a disaster for the U.S., for the people of Iraq, and for security and stability in the entire Middle East. It is time for an exit strategy that allows U.S. troops to come home while transferring responsibility to Iraqi political leaders and their security forces to ensure the future of their country.

After 52 months—more than 4 years—of American troops in Iraq there can be no doubt about the commitment and sacrifice these brave men and women have offered our Nation. While their comrades continue to fight in Iraq, some 2,600 Minnesota National Guardsmen and women are now returning home after 15 months of service. They are heroes who have done the job they have been asked to do by their commanders. Our Nation is proud of these Minnesota troops and we are also proud of their families who sacrificed as well.

Unfortunately, while U.S. troops fight for Iraq's future there is a tremendous failure on the part of Iraq's political leadership to make the sacrifices necessary to create a political environment that could lead to stability and security. Sectarian tensions are too often promoted by political leaders which directly or indirectly lead to violence and killings of innocent civilians, far too frequently in the most brutal fashion. If political leadership and institution building on the part of the Iraqis are the essential components that will create an environment in which easing of sectarian tensions and stability can take hold, then the Bush administration has failed completely.

In Iraq, car bombings, suicide bombers, roadside bombs, sectarian executions, kidnappings and assassinations are all daily events that I regret to say are now normal for those of us who read any American newspaper. From the safety of thousands of miles away this is a tragedy for the Iraqi people and for those coalition forces trying to achieve their

mission. For many of us it is also a tragedy because the war was manufactured by an American President who now appears to be completely out of touch with the dimension of the disaster he has created. Rather than rationally disengaging from the escalating violence inside Iraq, President Bush has escalated the U.S. presence with a "surge" strategy that in turn has cost more American lives.

Adding 30,000 U.S. troops since the beginning of 2007 has done nothing to change the fact that it is Iraqis who need to take control of their own country and confront the forces, including terrorists, militias, sectarian police, soldiers and politicians, that continue to eviscerate, day-by-day, their own nation. If President Bush added 100,000 more U.S. troops I am unconvinced that any change in the current situation would take place. Only a political solution can unify Iraqis in a manner that will allow them to focus their energy and resources on building a nation and ending the bloodshed.

The President's refusal to understand that Iraq is now damaging America—our military, our standing in the world, and the lost opportunities at home—is alarming. The fact is the Bush administration's actions in Iraq have resulted in far more harm, cost and pain to the U.S. than Saddam's regime ever could have inflicted on our Nation. Yet, the President's defenders in Congress and in the media continue to urge a "stay the course" strategy while invoking the name of Gen. David Petraeus as if he can singlehandedly erase four years of mistakes and ineptitude. General Petraeus is an excellent soldier and a talented leader, but he is not a miracle worker.

The time has come to for a rational, strategic plan to bring our troops home from Iraq and H.R. 2956 provides sound direction. The U.S. has interests in Iraq and the region which we must defend using our diplomatic, economic and military resources. We need to engage to a much greater extent with neighboring countries and the global powers to affect change inside Iraq. All this can be done while the 160,000 U.S. troops in Iraq are being withdrawn.

While I will vote for H.R. 2956 and I expect it to pass this House) I am also under no illusion that my Republican colleagues will vote against putting in place a strategy to bring our troops home. I have no doubt that President Bush would veto this legislation if it were to pass the Senate and be sent to the White House. Like the situation in Iraq, change cannot occur with regard to our policy in Iraq unless a political solution can be achieved in Congress with a veto proof majority of Members of the House and Senate. The American people must use their voice and put the pressure on House and Senate Republicans to support commonsense, responsible legislation, like H.R. 2956, which will put America's interests ahead of the President's hopelessly uncompromising commitment to a war without end in Iraq.

Finally, I want to commend Speaker Pelosi for her tireless leadership and commitment to

ending the war in Iraq while always working to advance America's interests. The Speaker knows our Nation's security is paramount and the policies of the current Administration have put America at risk. Her continued leadership will ultimately result in Americans coming home safer and sooner from Iraq.

IN WELCOMING THE PRESIDENT OF POLAND TO THE UNITED STATES

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to welcome President Lech Kaczynski of Poland to our nation's capital. After taking office in December of 2005, President Kaczynski has strengthened Poland's already close ties with the United States.

Under the leadership of President Kaczynski, Poland has been one of the United States closest allies in strengthening democracy in Europe. Poland is a partner in the war against terrorism and provides support and stability to American efforts throughout the world.

President Kaczynski is scheduled to meet with President Bush today, and both presidents plan to discuss the possible inclusion of Poland in the Visa Waiver Program. As I have said before, Poland is a first class friend of the United States, and should not be treated like a second-class citizen.

I look forward to working with President Kaczynski and President Bush in modernizing the Visa Waiver Program to provide our closest international partners the opportunity to travel to the United States while simultaneously strengthening our security.

President Kaczynski's leadership has been vital to continuing the dialogue between Poland and the United States on important issues ranging from the war on terror to economic issues, and I look forward to continuing to work with his government.

On behalf of the more than 110,000 residents of the Fifth Congressional District of Polish decent, I welcome President Kaczynski to Washington and thank him for his fine work and commitment to democracy.

HONORING GENERAL MARIANO GUADALUPE VALLEJO

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the 200th anniversary of the birth of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. General Vallejo was instrumental in the creation of a free California and

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