

As most Americans, I am eager to hear what General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker have to say about the military and political progress in Iraq. These men have spent literally decades mastering their respective professional fields. They deserve our respect, and over the last year they have earned our admiration. I know we will all welcome them and give them the fair hearing they have earned and that this all-important mission certainly deserves.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING KANSAS JAYHAWKS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I, too, recognize that the Senator from Kansas is on the floor today. I have to admit I was pulling for Kansas because they were very lucky in beating UNLV to get where they are. As a result of their good fortune the night they beat UNLV, I have been pulling for them since. Had it not been for the bad night UNLV had, they may not have made it. All the men on Kansas are 6 feet 5 inches; they are virtual giants. They won and it is a good day for Kansas. I acknowledge it is the first time Kansas has won in 20 years. They have a great basketball legacy and I wish them many years of good fortune in the future and congratulate Senator ROBERTS and the Kansas Jayhawks for their great victory last night.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is received.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will not be a period of morning business for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half of the time and Republicans controlling the second half.

The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first, I associate myself much with the remarks of Senator MCCONNELL. Serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee and having been in that theater more than any other Member from the very beginning, it is so obvious to see what the cost of defeat would be. When you look at Iran and Ahmadinejad saying that if the Americans cut and run, "there will be a void and we will fill that void," it would be a disaster for freedom and that would bring the fight

from over there over to our soil. We cannot let that happen.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT CHRISTOPHER M. HAKE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, having returned a few days ago from my 14th trip in the area, I think it is particularly meaningful to remember the life and sacrifice of a remarkable young man, Army Staff Sergeant Christopher Hake. Chris died on the 23rd of March, 2008, of injuries he sustained when an IED detonated near his Bradley fighting vehicle in Baghdad, Iraq.

Chris grew up in Enid, OK, with two sisters, Shannon and Kerl, and two brothers, Zachary and Skylar. I was in Enid yesterday. I looked around and I could see the area, the type of place where Chris grew up. He spent his time, as most Oklahoma boys did, attending school, playing ball, driving his car, spending time with family and friends, and going to church. His strong faith in Jesus matured during his time at Oklahoma Bible Academy. While there, he became very involved in his youth group and traveled to Mexico on a mission trip. Unsure of what he wanted to do after graduating from Oklahoma Bible Academy, Chris enlisted in the Army in 2000.

Chris excelled during basic training in Fort Benning and was selected to serve as a member of the "Old Guard"—one of the oldest and most respected infantry regiments in the U.S. Army. As a member of the Old Guard, Chris was responsible for guarding the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery and escorting deceased Army servicemembers to their final rest in the "Garden of Stone," as Arlington is sometimes called. While serving in the Old Guard unit, the Pentagon was attacked on September 11. Chris was immediately called upon to clear the Pentagon after the attack. This solidified Chris's commitment to the fight for freedom in the world and to protect the people of America. He saw that opportunity in Iraq.

In 2004, Chris transferred to the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, GA. While home during the summer of 2004, he met Kelli Short and it was love at first sight. They married on 21 December 2004, and Chris deployed on his first Iraq tour in January.

Chris was disillusioned after his first tour, feeling many of the decisions being made back in DC were negatively impacting their ability to accomplish the mission. I know this is true because I talked to the troops when I was over there on the 14 trips I have made. As we speak, in the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Petraeus is telling us the truth about what is happening over there.

Chris returned to Fort Stewart after his year in Iraq, and on October 14, 2006, Kelli gave birth to Gage Christopher Michael Hake.

Chris was both a loving husband and a proud father. His focus and love was his family—spending time with them, playing games with them, sitting for hours just to be with them, working on their house together.

Chris returned to Iraq on his second tour in October of 2007. He fought back his emotions as he said goodbye to his 1-year-old son, but he knew what he had to do and why. He loved serving his country. Once in Iraq again, Chris saw a difference in the mission and what was happening with the Iraqi people.

During his second tour, Chris said he knew he should be there and talked of the love of the Iraqi people for him and the troops. Pete Hake, Chris's father, remembered him saying: "You couldn't pay me to come home early." That is the kind of dedication Chris and so many others have.

On Easter Sunday, March 23, 2008, Chris Hake tragically died of injuries he sustained when an IED detonated near his vehicle in Baghdad. Three other soldiers of his battalion and under his command were killed alongside Chris. Chris's father recounted that Chris had said, "They would die for each other," and they did. They gave the ultimate sacrifice in serving their country.

In a recent e-mail to his mom and dad, he said he wanted to dedicate his second tour in Iraq to becoming a closer follower of Jesus. Chris wrote:

If anything were to happen to me, Gage would always be able to know that his father died so he could live in peace. I know Jesus did the same for me, so it is comforting. I don't have a nervous bone in my body this time. I am more at peace than I have been my whole life.

On March 31, Chris returned to Oklahoma and was greeted by an honor guard from Fort Sill, members of the Patriot Guard Riders motorcycle group, Airmen from Vance Air Force Base, and a mass of fellow Oklahomans to honor this American hero. It was obvious he held the respect of so many, and he was a beloved son, father, and husband.

I read through some of the comments written in Chris's online guest book, and I would like to share a few of these with you:

Thank you for your sacrifice—my children will know what men like you have done for them.

I am the mom of a soldier serving in Iraq and just wanted to tell you how proud I am of your son, husband, and daddy.

Know that 1st Squad will always maintain and exceed the standards you have set. We miss you.

I read through all of the entries and cried. I hope it is comforting to know that there are so many of us praying for you.

John 15:13—Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

The "Spartans" will keep you close to our hearts forever in time.

Thank you for being my son. Thank you for Gage, a little copy of you. Thank you for fighting and making a stand. Goodbye, my son, my baby boy, my U.S. soldier, my pride and joy.

Today, we remember Staff Sergeant Chris Hake, a young man who loved his