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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 4, 2009.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DONNA F. EDWARDS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2009, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

GUANTANAMO BAY'S UYGHUR DETAINEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that President Obama's decision regarding the release into the U.S. of a number of Uyghur detainees held at Guantanamo Bay since 2002 could be imminent.

The New York Times, ABC News and other news outlets have reported that the President will soon release these terrorists into the United States, yet this Congress has not been briefed on this decision.

Let me be clear, these terrorists would not be held in prisons, but they would be released into your neighborhoods. They should not be released into the United States. Do Members realize who these people are?

There have been published reports that the Uyghurs were members of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, a designated terrorist organization affiliated with al Qaeda.

Releasing the Uyghurs is a matter of grave concern, a matter which prompted me to send a letter to the President last Friday detailing my reservations about any course of action that could pose a threat to the American people.

In my letter I called on the President to declassify all information about the capture and detention of the Uyghur detainees, including a threat assessment for each detainee who would be released in the U.S.

The American people, Madam Speaker, deserve the facts about these detainees and the risk they potentially pose to our communities.

Following the precedent that the administration set in declassifying the Office of Legal Counsel interrogation memos, they have a moral obligation to the American people to declassify all relevant information related to the Uyghur detainees.

This administration has already shown that it has no qualms about releasing selected classified documents. The White House cannot just pick and choose what classified information it deems worthy of releasing. It cannot have it both ways. It shouldn't release information that conveniently makes their case without making information with profound national security implications available to the American people.

After learning that this decision was imminent, I requested briefings from a number of relevant agencies, but all the agencies have told me that our Department of Justice is now preventing them from speaking to me directly on this issue. So much for being open. So much for disclosure.

Is the Attorney General preventing agencies from answering Members' questions? Is this a political decision being made by Eric Holder, the Attorney General?

This is not the transparency and accountability the President promised, nor is it the open and constructive relationship they claim they want with Congress. This is, at best, a poor judgment and, at worst, a dangerous hypocrisy.

Is the administration intent on keeping Congress and the American people in the dark about critically important national security issues?

Madam Speaker, I have criticized both Republican and Democratic administrations for actions that I believe undermine the safety and the security of the American people.

I have not received responses to two letters to Attorney General Holder on the transfer of Guantanamo Bay prisoners. The first letter was dated March 13. The second letter was dated April 23. And I will submit them for the RECORD. They still have not answered the letters. My office has been told by the White House that some of the questions I have asked cannot even be answered.

When Attorney General Holder appeared before the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations subcommittee, he poignantly said he would not play hide and seek with the information. What are they now trying to hide from the American people?

The Attorney General is slow-rolling the information as terrorist detainees are potentially going to be released into the United States.

According to an L.A. Times article published last week, ''The Homeland Security Department has registered concerns about the plan,'' among other government agencies.

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