

units, of which 54,000 served low-income populations. During his August 27 visit to New Orleans, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan emphasized the need to revitalize this housing and highlighted the importance of a placed-in-service extension.

With an extension, developers will be able to attract investors to their proposed developments, have adequate time to overcome financial barriers triggered by the current economic crisis, and create more opportunities for residents displaced by the 2005 hurricanes to return home. Without an extension, more than 6,000 units are unlikely to be completed. The loss of more than \$1 billion in economic activity—to the construction industry, suppliers, professionals, developers and others—would be a major blow to our states and the region.

Your initiative in helping the Gulf Coast to recover has been invaluable. It is our hope that the Senate Finance Committee will continue this leadership by including a placed-in-service extension in a tax extenders bill or other legislation this year. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

MARY L. LANDRIEU,  
*United States Senator.*  
DAVID B. VITTER,  
*United States Senator.*  
ROGER F. WICKER,  
*United States Senator.*  
THAD COCHRAN,  
*United States Senator.*

#### CHRISTMAS OVERSEAS

Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about those Nebraskans who will be overseas, in harm's way, this Christmas.

The job our young men and women in uniform do to protect our safety every day is magnificent. I have met with many of these young service men and women throughout my years of public service, and I know they represent the very best of America. During my time as Governor, it was truly an honor to command Nebraska's National Guard forces. They serve our country with immense valor, at the risk of their own lives. To them, we are all deeply grateful.

Christmas in wartime has always been a difficult time for troops and their families. The contrast is very great between Americans at home celebrating holiday cheer, and those on the front lines going about their regular day of danger. It is a contrast that we should be mindful of this season. I, and many of my fellow Nebraskans, will pause tomorrow to give thanks for the sacrifice of our troops, and pray that they get home safely. Their mission is just, and they are the most capable military in the world. Their presence is missed at this time more than any other but our pride, in them and their friends, is even greater than our sorrow at their absence.

So to those Nebraskans who are in harm's way this Christmas, and to all American forces, those who serve abroad to protect us here at home, I truly thank you. I hope it will be, in some small measure, a comfort on this Christmas, to know that so many of your friends, family, and fellow Americans are safe and secure due to your service, and praying for you.

So today, as always, I wish you all a safe return, and a very Merry Christmas.

#### AMERICAN HIKERS DETAINED BY IRAN

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise today to renew my appeal to the Government of Iran to immediately release the three American hikers—Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd, and Josh Fattal—who were detained by Iranian authorities in July.

According to available information, the three young adults, who are all graduates of the University of California, Berkeley, inadvertently crossed an unmarked border into Iran while hiking in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq.

Shane, Sarah and Josh have now been held in semi-isolation for over 140 days without charge, access to legal representation, or information on the current status of their case and future proceedings. This is deeply troubling and incredibly difficult for their families.

I recently spoke to the Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations on behalf of the hikers to reiterate my call for their release. I also asked that they be able to call their families and continue to be visited by Swiss consular officials.

During this holiday season, Americans from all walks of life are celebrating and renewing ties of family, friendship, and good will.

The extended absence of these young Americans from their families is particularly painful during such a festive time. As such, I call upon the Iranian authorities to immediately release Shane, Sarah and Josh so that their families can welcome them home.

#### 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, this month, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, USASOC, celebrates 20 years of service to the Army and Nation. Having been at war for over one-third of that time, the men and women of USASOC continue to make great contributions worldwide with an operations tempo that has never been greater. USASOC remains committed to maintaining the world's finest ground special operations force. Its personnel take quiet professional pride in executing each mission with excellence, honor and valor.

I am proud that USASOC's headquarters are in North Carolina. USASOC Commander LTG John Mulholland has done a tremendous job in training, organizing, and equipping Army Special Forces units, capable of conducting global Special Operations missions. Army Special Forces units perform a variety of missions, including special reconnaissance, psychological, civil affairs, unconventional

warfare, foreign internal defense, direct action, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency.

The principle units that make up today's USASOC include the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, U.S. Army Special Forces Command, 75th Ranger Regiment, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, 3rd and 7th Special Forces Group, 4th Psychological Operations Group, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade and the 528th Sustainment Brigade.

Since its inception on December 1, 1989, the pace of USASOC's operations has been extraordinary; operating around the world, often behind-the-lines, in some of the most remote and hostile regions on the planet.

At more than 27,000 personnel, USASOC is only 5 percent of the U.S. Army. However, USASOC is the largest of the service components that make up U.S. Special Operations Command, USSOCOM, and provides approximately 70 percent of the special operations personnel in Central Command's theater and approximately 63 percent of America's total overseas military commitments. USASOC provides trained and ready Army special operations forces to support the Geographic Combatant Commanders, GCC, the Theater Special Operations Commands, TSO, and Ambassadors throughout the world.

Today the operations tempo for Army Special Operations has never been greater, and is unlikely to decrease in the near future. USASOC currently has soldiers deployed on 103 Missions in 56 countries around the world, and is operating across the spectrum of operations.

Currently 222 of the Army's 228 Continental United States-based Special Forces operational detachments "A"—ODA—are committed to supporting operations worldwide, either deployed or preparing for deployment. USASOC's ability to manage the high operations tempo is directly attributable to the caliber of its personnel. The range of skills within USASOC is embraced by a spectrum of Army unconventional units.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the great contributions of USASOC units currently in theater, particularly the 3rd and 7th Special Forces Groups in Afghanistan, the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade and the 4th Psychological Operations Group in Iraq and Afghanistan.

President Obama has stated in his agenda for defense, "We must build up our special operations forces, civil affairs, information operations and other units and capabilities." The demand for special operations personnel, skills and training remain high. Faced with often desperate, unconventional enemies, our approaches for defeating them involve unwavering commitment combined with unique unconventional skills.

USASOC's expertise ensures the Army's special operations forces can execute the most lethal, highly complex and sensitive special operations,