

Master of Education, AA certification, in 1973 from Alabama State University.

As an educator, she taught at North Highland School, Prattville Intermediate School and Autauga County Training School System. She later taught at Central Alabama OIC under the leadership of Mrs. Consuella Harper.

As an active member of Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, she was a member of the Young Matrons under the pastorate of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., the sanctuary choir, The Red Circle, a Sunday School teacher, The April Club and Vacation Bible School for over 50 years.

She was involved in Les Voguettes and ISTAP (I Support the Athletic Program) at Alabama State University.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring the life of Rebecca May Wood Stringer Holbert.

THE THREAT OF TERRORISM IS STILL VERY PRESENT

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2018

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the long war on terrorism is not over. From North Africa to Southeast Asia, radical jihadism fights on from the shadows, waiting for us to grow complacent once again. We have claimed victory and lowered our guard too many times before only to have terrorist groups grow resurgent and deadly again. The scourge of violent Islamism is a multigeneration challenge as the battle against communism was decades ago. While we have had many successes, the threat remains and must be confronted.

Looking at where extremism still lives today we see many familiar battlefields. In the Philippines, a ISIS affiliate was handed a major defeat last year at the city of Marawi. But remnants of this group live on, recruiting and scheming in the jungle. Only by denying them an opportunity to regroup and gain ground again can we prevent them from attracting new supporters and new momentum.

Moving to Pakistan, we still find a state that claims to be an American ally but allows terrorist leaders to operate freely in the open. For too long we have provided billions of dollars to the Pakistani government as they betrayed us. The Taliban, al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and other violent groups continue to find safe haven in Pakistan. They have injected their violent ideology into mainstream Pakistani politics, causing minorities to be routinely persecuted through despotic blasphemy laws. Pakistan's partnership with terrorism has led to continued violence within its neighbors India and Afghanistan. If Pakistan had truly been our ally, the Taliban would never had a place to run to after our intervention in Afghanistan. Yet, more than 17 years later, the Taliban is resurgent, retaking Afghan districts that we had long ago secured through American blood and treasure. We must not abandon this fight, but instead find a solution that ensures that al-Qaeda is never able to return and that the Taliban lay down their weapons and respect Afghanistan's young democracy.

Nonetheless, Pakistan is not the only terrorist sponsoring state fueling instability in the region. Iran is also playing its part in arming and assisting terrorists fighting our forces in

Afghanistan and across the Middle East. After signing the nuclear deal with the Obama administration, the Mullahs in Iran received billions of dollars in sanctions relief that was diverted directly to their legion of terrorist proxies. Now the Middle East is engulfed in chaos as Iran's militias march against our allies. Proxies like Hezbollah, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Kataib Hezbollah, the Houthis, and others are operating with impunity, massacring thousands in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. They have targeted Americans in Iraq and Syria and have plans to attack our friends in Israel. This gathering storm will lead to inevitable conflict if we do nothing.

Meanwhile ISIS has gone underground. While we have destroyed the so-called caliphate that inspired dozens of attacks in the U.S. and Europe, the deadly terror group has reverted to its insurgent roots. When President Obama foolishly withdrew our troops from Iraq in 2011, there were no more than 700 fighters remaining in ISIS's predecessor. The State Department even reduced the bounty for ISIS's eventual leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, believing the group was a shell of its former self. But those assumptions proved wrong. Without U.S. forces to stop their advance and local societies plagued with Iranian-backed sectarianism, ISIS rose from the ashes to dominate an area the size of Britain. ISIS still has thousands of fighters dispersed throughout Iraq and Syria. We must not repeat Obama's mistake. A committed strategy to ensure ISIS's enduring defeat is required moving forward. We must send a signal to friends and adversaries alike that America is not turning its back on the region again.

No ally knows the persistent struggle against terrorism more than Israel. Today, terrorists from Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and ISIS in Sinai are seeking Israel's destruction. Just recently Israel discover attack tunnels crossing from Lebanon into its territory which Hezbollah had built for the sole purpose of causing murder and mayhem in the Jewish State. America continues to stand firmly with Israel, providing the needed aid to keep our shared enemies at bay. But as instability continues throughout the region, Iran and other extremists will plot and recruit to wage war on our Israeli friends. Our duty as allies requires us to be vigilant in addressing these emerging threats before they become major obstacles for peace.

Lastly, looking at North Africa and the Sahel new challenges have risen. Where there were once only about 100 al-Qaeda-linked terrorists, there is now a multitude of extremist networks with as many as 10,000 fighters. Groups like Boko Haram, al-Shabab, ISIS, and Ansar al-Sharia have sowed chaos in places like Nigeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Somalia, preventing poor nations from reaching their full potential. These fragile states need a steady ally to help build their capabilities and lead a joint campaign to seek out and destroy the transnational terrorist threat in the region. Rather than pour endless taxpayer dollars into development efforts that are undone by local extremists, we need to formulate a strategy that addresses the lasting security vacuum terrorists have exploited.

The violent ideology that has motivated thousands to wage a life or death struggle against the United States and its allies is not gone. This ideology has long been present, but it

was not until the September 11th attacks that we woke up to its lethal ability and reach. Since then we have learned that this cancerous radical belief is adaptive and will not be defeated in one decisive battle. This is a long war we have no choice but to fight. We must also adapt our thinking and find committed partners who we can stand with us in this global struggle.

And that's just the way it is.

HONORING CARLOS TORRES

HON. VICENTE GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2018

Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my fellow lawmakers: who is protecting those that protected this nation?

Carlos Torres, an Army veteran who served during the Vietnam War, passed away on Sunday, December 9, 2018, at the age of 64. However, Mr. Torres did not leave this Earth in the home he served. Instead, he left us having been isolated by a country that failed to provide him his due citizenship after military service.

Mr. Torres, an immigrant from Mexico, joined the U.S. Army with the promise and hope of becoming an American citizen following his service. However, once he completed his service, he was denied, he was ignored, and he was left unprotected by a system that abandoned so many others. Distracted by this lack of care and naturalization progress, Mr. Torres—like so many others—turned to other means of catharsis.

He was caught with marijuana. He was charged. He was deported. He was sent back to Mexico, making less than a dollar a day. Without VA benefits. Without his family. Without hope.

On Thursday, December 13, 2018, he returned to the United States, but this time, he returned in death.

Mr. Speaker, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans, we failed Carlos Torres and so many like him. We cannot continue to desert these American patriots. The time for retribution is now.

Last year, I introduced H.R. 3429, the Repatriate Our Patriots Act, a bill that would create a pathway to citizenship for deported veterans who held a clean record prior to service. Time is running out. The lives of these men and women depend on our immediate actions. We must pass this bill. We must make amends. We must do so now for the thousands of deported veterans, for their families, for Carlos Torres.

COMMENDING MARIA LOURDES BENITEZ

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2018

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Maria Lourdes Benitez for her service to my office and the 21st Congressional District of California over the past year.

Maria Benitez was born on November 23, 1966 in Los Angeles and was raised in Escondido, California. After graduating from Orange