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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 14, 2005.

I hereby appoint the Honorable LYNN A. WESTMORELAND to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate extend beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

RICE AS AN ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCE

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to highlight the prospect of using rice as an alternative energy source in the production of ethanol.

We all understand the importance of securing affordable and reliable means of energy for future generations. On the heels of the comprehensive energy bill that this body passed in April, which encourages ethanol production, I submit that rice and rice farmers spe-

cifically could contribute to this endeavor.

Rice producers like those in my southeast Texas district face great difficulties in finding markets for their goods. Just a few years ago, there were over 600,000 acres in Texas that was farmed for rice, about the size of Rhode Island. Now, less than 200,000 acres are rice farmlands.

One untapped potential market is ethanol. While many folks think about ethanol developed from corn, not much attention has been directed to ethanol developed from rice. The process of cellulosic conversion can derive ethanol from various sources including rice. It is essential that the Department of Agriculture continue their work with the universities in Texas to fund research into this type of conversion to ethanol.

I understand the problems facing rice farmers in Texas. It is critical to support scientific research that develops new markets for our farmers. Cellulosic conversion holds the promise of deriving ethanol from rice along with other biomass materials.

Mr. Speaker, the President's budget was tough on farm programs and it is important that we support agricultural research that benefits American farmers and helps supply Americans with more energy.

AMERICA'S MILITARY PROBLEMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak again about the dire situation in Iraq. A series of articles over the last week has drawn attention to two related issues, the slow training and improvement in quality of the Iraqi security forces, and the problems in recruitment in the American mili-

tary, particularly in our Army that risk breaking our force.

I fear, though, that without greater attention to these two problems, we are endangering not only our efforts in Iraq, but also our future military force.

Mr. Speaker, Lieutenant General Dave Petraeus has had the mission of training the Iraqi security forces and turning them into the professional fighting force since last spring. He is a fine officer and a great leader.

But, this is a mammoth task. And over a year, they have only produced three battalions, around 5,000 soldiers capable of conducting fully independent operations. This is disheartening. And then when we read stories like the ones in last week's Washington Post, of embedded American trainers describing the Iraqi trainers as preschoolers with guns, it is easy to think that American forces would have to stay in Iraq a long time to get those forces to the point where they can handle their security on their own.

We have to speed up the process. Our NATO partners have promised to lend their efforts to training Iraqi security forces. They must get more engaged and soon. We have embedded trainers and transition teams with the Iraqis. We must commit even more trainees to the effort.

If that means moving more Air Force and Navy personnel to Army billets to free them up for this mission, we need to do this. We need to accomplish this mission as quickly as possible because time is not on our side.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a race against time. We are either going to lose the American people's support for this effort or break the Army. This month the Army's recruiting numbers are far below its goal, and it is an unmistakable trend. Although retention is holding, the toll is shaking the very foundation of American structure. Army marriages, broken under the strain of an unsustainable operations tempo are

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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failing at an ever increasing rate. This is a sure sign of more troubles ahead.

To meet a critical need in the short term, the Army has reduced quality standards on its accessions. It is retaining problematic recruits and has relaxed commissioning qualifications for its officers. Anybody with a sense of history can understand the inherent risk in these policies, and they strike me as unwise.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Army will soon approach Congress for authority to offer enlistment bonuses of up to \$40,000. That is a huge sum. And while I support it, I am doubtful it will have the effect the Army is looking for.

I wonder how long we can continue throwing money at this recruiting problem. I have always been a proud supporter of our troops. I have advocated pay raises for our service members and benefit increases for their families. I have done this for years. No one has been more consistent than I in calling for increased end strength, which I think would have alleviated many of these problems had they been enacted in a timely manner.

I cannot fault the Army for using everything in its power to attack the manpower challenge, but it is not the Army's problem it is the Nation's problem. Yesterday I sent a letter to the Secretary of Defense laying out the problem, which I would like to place in the RECORD at this time.

In this letter I urged the Secretary to develop a comprehensive vision of how the Department of Defense will approach the Army's crisis, and let him know that I would put out a call of my own to the youth of this Nation. We must not break the American support for our military. We must renew it by inspiring young people across our Nation to serve.

We cannot inspire that service by appealing to action in Iraq alone; it is defending our Nation from future threats and keeping our military the strongest in the world that may inspire their best. Along with the enlistment bonuses, they need a national call to service from our leaders that inspires them to keep our Nation and our military strong beyond Iraq. That will see us through the current fight and help us deter any future threat.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2005.

Hon. DONALD L. RUMSFELD,
Secretary of Defense,
The Pentagon, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: It is clear to me the most important key to our success in Iraq is the development of the Iraqi security forces, and the infrastructure that supports and sustains them. I know you share that assessment. However, I recently sat through a briefing by the Joint Staff on the subject, and while we are making progress, it is painfully slow indeed. We have no choice but to accelerate the training of Iraqi forces so that we can hand the mission off to them as soon as possible. It is a race against time: either the American people will sour on this war and demand our withdrawal prematurely, or the American Army will break.

Iraq now represents a crisis that didn't exist when we began the war two years ago. Even as public support for the war ebbs lower and lower, the United States Army is on the brink of collapsing. Indeed, it may be that serious damage has been done to it already. In any case, it will not recover fully for years, and that is a national security threat we can ill afford.

This month, the Army's recruiting numbers are far below its goal, and this is an unmistakable trend. Although retention is holding, the toll is shaking the very foundation of American social structure. Army marriages, broken under the strain of an unsustainable operations tempo, are failing at an ever increasing rate. That is a sure sign of more troubles ahead.

To meet a critical need in the short term, the Army has reduced quality standards on its accessions. It is retaining problematic recruits and relaxed commissioning qualifications for its officers. Anybody with a sense of history can understand the inherent risk in these policies, and they strike me as unwise. Additionally, I understand that the Army will soon approach Congress for authority to offer enlistment bonuses of up to \$40,000. That is a huge sum, and while I support it, I am doubtful it will have the effect the Army is looking for.

I wonder how long we can continue throwing money at this recruiting problem. It is not the expense, because we can pay the cost if we align our national priorities properly. Instead, it is about precedents and principles. This insurgency is essentially a war of ideologies and therefore one must ask: What message do we send to our enemy when they can recruit suicide bombers as fast as they need them but we cannot entice our young men and women to serve without large sums of cash up front?

Mr. Secretary, as you know, I have always been a proud supporter of our troops; I have advocated pay raises for our service members and benefit increases their families for years. No one has been more consistent than I in calling for increased end strength, which I think would have alleviated a many of these problems, had they been enacted in a timely manner. I cannot fault the Army for using everything in its power to attack this manpower challenge, but this is not the Army's problem. It is the nation's problem.

I do not believe the youth of America is unwilling or incapable of serving their country for reasons other than a large bonus, but I think their country is not making a clear and compelling argument about why they should. Therefore, Mr. Secretary, I urge you to develop a comprehensive vision of how the Department of Defense will approach the Army's crisis.

In the absence of a unifying national message urging young Americans to consider military service, I will develop my own, and I will not miss an opportunity to deliver it. Frankly, it is becoming easier for me to articulate why it is important that we not lose in Iraq than it is to describe why we must win. It is not just about the dangers of losing a nation with the potential for representative self-government after so many years of tyranny, or about allowing a viper's nest of terrorism to flourish in the heart of the Middle East. Those reasons are powerful geopolitical considerations, but there are other compelling reasons for America as well.

Essentially, my message to these young people will be this: the issue is no longer just about what is good for the war in Iraq—this is about what is good for the long term health and security of our nation. While our nation's policies in Iraq have been poorly formulated at the strategic level by our civilian leadership—Congress included—the policy guidance has been superbly executed

at lower levels by our military. Right now, the strength of our national effort is in the high quality of our military forces. We need high quality people to continue to step up to serve. If they will not, the military we built out of the ashes following the Vietnam war into the finest force in history will atrophy to the point where it will be unready to fight the next time it is called upon—whether that is responding to a terrorist attack, deterring a conflict on the Korean Peninsula or across the Taiwan Strait, or somewhere else we can't yet foresee. I sincerely hope that the Department of Defense will do everything it can to raise this issue to the forefront of the national consciousness.

Mr. Secretary, before the war in Iraq began I sent the President two letters outlining my concerns about how the war was going to be conducted and how the aftermath would be handled. Sadly, many of my concerns regarding the aftermath have been realized. I was right then, and I am right now. The training of the Iraqi security forces must take on even greater urgency, and we must act to avoid the concerns I have described in this letter.

Sincerely,

IKE SKELTON,
Ranking Democrat.

AFGHANISTAN, THE NEW FORGOTTEN WAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) for his leadership on the Armed Services Committee on the Democratic side, and his poignant remarks here this morning.

Not only are we dealing with the situation, Mr. Speaker, in Iraq, we are also dealing with a major forgotten situation in Afghanistan. And as we began the war in Iraq, many, many, many months ago, we began to shift our focus from Afghanistan to Iraq.

And we must remember that it was the Taliban who was harboring Osama bin Laden. And it was Osama bin Laden who funded and coordinated the attacks on September 11 on the World Trade Towers in New York, on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

So it is important for us to remember where this all started. And now, today, several years later, we have 19,000 troops in Afghanistan, and 140,000 troops in Iraq. We have forgotten and taken our eye off the ball. And one of the major concerns I have, Mr. Speaker, with the situation in Afghanistan is the issue of opium, the poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

Two-and-a-half billion dollars, one-half of the GDP of Afghanistan is poppy, 70 percent of that sold in Europe as opium, funding through the black market, the terrorists cells not only in this country but all across the world. And it is very difficult for us to trace that underground economy. And I believe it was 5 or 6 months ago when the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was before our Armed Services Committee. I asked him, what are we going to do