

response. We had loss of life here after the storm because people could not get what they needed as Americans. Here, this same area, President signs a proclamation waiving Davis-Bacon which will allow these individuals in these States, and these communities right here, real people in these counties and the parishes right up here in Louisiana, same place, same President, flying in there, four, five visits, what have you, that are without a prevailing wage, which means a contractor can go in and say, no minimum wage for this job, even though Federal jobs in other parts of the country that are paid for with Federal dollars, paid for, they make a prevailing wage.

It is not a union issue. This is an American issue. We want to make sure that these folks rebuild. Better yet, the \$62.3 billion-and-change that we have appropriated here in this Congress, when it comes down to these individuals receiving a paycheck when many of those jobs have been shut down and some have decided was the final blow for them to move somewhere else will not be able to receive a prevailing wage on the tax dollars that they have given in this area.

That is why we need an independent commission. These individuals, these very real people right here in Hancock County in Mississippi, one of the hardest hit areas here in a FEMA trailer waiting to speak to an operator, I know personally that they were outside for 2 hours waiting to get into this trailer of 10 phones. 10 phones.

They deserve an independent, bipartisan commission to make sure that the Federal response is better, quicker. So this goes far beyond regular order that we say here in the Congress. This is not a committee that has been standing for 50-something years and that is just the way we do business. This is a natural disaster and failure of governance.

And that is where we come in, on the failure of governance side. These are real Americans that are suffering. I ask our Republican leadership, do not allow this institution to do what it is doing now.

Do not split us further by having a partisan committee meet tomorrow because they can, not because it is the right thing, it is because they can. That is wrong.

If we were supposed to be the shining example of government, elected in a democracy, do not allow that to happen. Do not do it because you can. Because I can do things as a grown up, I do not do certain things in front of my children, because it is a bad example. This is a bad example.

And I will tell you that it is far beyond regular order. I am talking to my colleagues in this Congress, and you know exactly what I am saying. This is far beyond, because we are in the majority. That is right. We are supposed to have more people on the committee. This is a natural unprecedented disaster.

And this was a slow response or no response at all. So I say to Members that it is important that we do this. I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, our Democratic leader for allowing us to come to the floor once again.

I want to also say that it is an honor to address the House of Representatives, but this is a very pressing time, not only for our country, but also as it relates to our leadership, and I hope that we can come together and make sure that we have a bipartisan independent commission that the American people are calling for so badly.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a concurrent resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 242. Concurrent resolution providing for acceptance of a statue of Po'Pay, presented by the State of New Mexico, for placement in National Statuary Hall, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1713. An act to make amendments to the Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000 related to International Space Station payments.

#### U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SODREL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I think I will be joined by some colleagues shortly, I hope.

Congress recently returned to Washington following a busy month of work in the district. For a majority of August, I traveled throughout North Carolina's 5th District and conducted scores of meetings with veterans, teachers, and many other constituent groups.

During this time, I gained valuable insight into the needs of the people I serve and look forward to continuing to address their concerns. The needs of my home district have always been and continue to be my number one priority.

However, as a Member of Congress, it is my duty to educate myself on internal affairs and foreign policy, especially when it pertains to the Middle East. While our foreign neighbors may be far away from northwest North Carolina, our relationships with them affect everyone.

For 1 week in August, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to Israel with several colleagues. This educational trip gave me the opportunity to witness how America's national security interests are directly tied to developments in the Middle East, and specifically to Israel's own security.

Strategic cooperation between our country and Israel, in intelligence-sharing, fighting the war on terror, strengthening homeland security, promoting democracy, and increasing technology development is vital to the well-being of my constituents and, indeed, all Americans.

For most of the 1,500 years before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the land of Israel was the independent home of the Jewish people. Since then, it has been occupied by many powers, from the Romans to conquering Arab armies to the Ottomans to the British.

Despite these periods of foreign occupation, there has always been a continuous Jewish presence, and the land of Israel remained the focal point for the Jewish people.

The United States and Israel have long maintained a strong friendship since the modern Jewish state was founded in 1948. In fact, we were the very first Nation to recognize Israel, just 11 minutes after its founding.

Our two countries share much more in common than many realize. We believe in freedom and equality and share many basic rights, such as free elections, a free press, and freedom of religion. We were both founded by people seeking freedom from tyranny, and we both continue to serve today as symbols of liberty in a world plagued by oppression.

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to recognize my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MARCHANT), who has joined me and allow him to share some of his perspectives on this trip that we took in August, and then I will come back to the podium and speak some more.

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, last month I was fortunate as a Member of Congress to travel to Israel and witness firsthand the peace process that is currently taking place.

□ 1900

The trip was a unique opportunity to learn more about relations between the United States and Israel. This country has maintained a longstanding friendship with the Jewish state since its creation in 1948. Today, cooperation between the U.S. and Israel is essential as we fight the war on terror and promote peace in the Middle East. Israel is, has been, and will continue to be an important ally in the goal to spread democracy worldwide and promote peace in the Middle East.

I was privileged to have the opportunity to meet with many high-ranking officials from the region, including Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, as well as Former Prime Minister BiBi Netanyahu and Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Talking with these leaders provided me with valuable insight into the ongoing peace process and plans for the region. While their approaches are different, their common goal remains the same: peace and fulfillment of the Jewish homeland.

On the final day I met with Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Palestinian Authority. I, along with my colleagues, stressed with him how important it was to the United States that the terrorists be disarmed and that peace be advanced within the region.

Mr. Speaker, my rigorous schedule included an extensive tour of this country. Although Israel is smaller than the State of New Jersey, I was thoroughly impressed with its infrastructure and potential for growth. In just over 50 years of existence, Israel has developed a remarkable highway system and infrastructure. As we visited universities, holy sites, military bases, it was easy to tell how modern and highly accomplished Israel is today and what an incredible potential that it has with its people.

Throughout the country's history, the Israeli people have experienced violence and terror on their home soil. Normal citizens' lives have been threatened in schools, malls, and other public places at the hands of suicide bombers. Israel, though, is committed to combating terrorism and to world peace.

During my trip I was able to attend various briefings and got to see the security fence that separates Israel from Palestine and other tools that have been effectively used by Israelis to deter the terrorist attacks.

I traveled also to the developing Negev Desert area. This region has experienced a surge in development and opportunities with its diverse residents. The community is composed of Israelis, Arabs, and Bedouins. Its growing strength is vital to Israel's national security interests as well as an excellent place for new settlement. The United States needs to play a key role in the assistance of the development of this desert area.

This trip was also especially important because it took place in the midst of the disengagement of Gaza and the northern part of the West Bank. I was one of the few Americans to be able to visit Israel during this very historic time. Over 8,000 Israelis were relocated from the Gaza Strip.

The courageous decision to withdraw from Gaza carries serious risks for Israel. It proves the willingness of the Jewish state to take enormous chances for peace. Withdrawal provides Palestinian leadership the opportunity to curb terrorism and govern its people. Prime Minister Sharon explained that he believed the painstaking process is the best long-term decision for Israel. Only time will tell whether Gaza will become a catalyst for peace or the new headquarters of terrorism.

Now more than ever, Israel needs America's support. Israel's commitment to peace is vital in this time of war and oppression in the Middle East. As America continues with its mission to spread freedom and democracy, the Israeli people have to be, and will be, our very important allies. They deserve our respect and our cooperation.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, we had a distinguished group with us on our trip, and I am very privileged to recognize the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) who is going to share some of his observations of the trip with us now.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) giving me this opportunity of sharing a few of the experiences that I had while visiting Israel with the distinguished group this past summer.

I think there are four impressions that I will always take back from my short trip to Israel. The first one is how wonderful it was to be in a place where you saw a specific pro-American attitude from everyone, from the leaders of the country down to the people on the street, with whom you spoke.

Secondly, I have to admit that even though I was in Israel, I felt like I was back in Utah because the topography is very similar. The mountains of Judea, I was right on the Wasatch Front again. Going to the desert was like going to Price, to Moab back in Utah. Whereas in Israel they have the Sea of Galilee that empties into the Jordan River and empties into a Dead Sea, the saltiest sea in the world, in my home State we have Utah Lake which empties into the Jordan River which empties into the saltiest sea in this hemisphere, the Great Salt Lake. So I was back home.

Third, and perhaps for me most important, the ability of buying Dr. Pepper on the market in Jerusalem told me that I was in a country that was purely cultured and progressive, and I was extremely grateful for that.

Finally, I was truly impressed by the size. I think one of the things that we Americans do not realize so fully is how our size has always been a defense. Perhaps as somebody from the West, I recognize that as well, when my county is the size of Rhode Island. Sometime we take size for granted. It is part of our mentality.

But it is very clear in this country where you can go in a matter of hours from the mountains of the Golan down to the desert in Negev, that is not a large area. In fact, it takes me longer to drive from one end of my district to the other end than it does to go through the country of Israel.

When I realized, as you were looking out at the horizon, you will see one mountain top that is Palestinian and the next mountain top is Israeli. And how close they are. We understand that security becomes the major concern of this people. And once again we have kind of a cavalier attitude in the United States about how important security is to those people who live in this particular area. We also understand it is very clear that if there is ever going to be a lasting peace between the Palestinians and Israelis, if there is ever going to be a permanent government between the Palestinians and Israelis in this area of the world,

then terrorism has to stop, and that has to be the first and foremost priority.

I think it is wonderful that we have this chance of exchanging ideas and changing institutions. I just gave a speech on this floor a few moments ago about the importance of foreign exchange students and having exchange students understanding American life. Taking it back becomes one of those things that will help us in the future in foreign affairs. I think this is the same way.

There is much that we can learn about the experience of Israel. As we are going through the issues of border security in the United States, there is much that we can learn from how the Israelis have handled that particular situation, much we can learn as far as technology that may be one of those things that can help us in the future.

I was also feeling especially important to be there, as some have mentioned, I think others will as well, to be there at the time of pullout from the Gaza Strip. Nothing, I think, that could ever happen has shown the commitment on the part of the Israeli Government to peace more than that. And everything happened with an ability of doing things in a peaceful and successful way. It showed that even though there was some protest, it was an orderly disengagement. Even though it may be strategic, it was still nonetheless a gamble on the part of the Israelis. It clearly illustrated that the ball is now in the court of the Palestinians and the Egyptians.

I am very pleased that the Egyptians seemed to have moved up and stepped up to take their position in the patrolling of the Philadelphia Corridor. And the amount of troops they have moved in there, though it is still under 1,000, it still is a significant presence. I hope that signals something that will be positive in the future.

It is also significant that the Palestinians have to make a positive response in the future to this particular situation. If they do not, if they simply say that permitting foreign civil war from taking place is sufficient, then they deserve the criticism of the world, for there will be no room for equivocation. Abbas has a choice in here of being a true hero of the future and moving the peace process forward or being a catalyst for the means of world chaos.

I was happy that before I went I also had the opportunity of reading a history of the Six Day War. Once again we sometimes have illusions and misconceptions as Americans. One of the misconceptions is the Israeli Army and the Israeli defense forces are impregnable, they are impenetrable, and they will always win in every situation.

Learning the details of the Six Day War and the places that we looked at when I actually got there, I realized that the victory of the Israelis in the Six Day War had as much to do with luck as it had to do with military ability. There were decisions that were

made on both sides in that particular war, which if they had gone the other way, would have had an entirely different outcome.

That also illustrated one more time how the Israeli situation is indeed tenuous. We cannot place any blame on the Israelis for being so concerned about their security in a land where an enemy sworn against them is so close and has so many terrorist activities, killing over 1,000 people in the last 5 years. With those images coming back there, I am proud to be able to see the people who, perhaps even better than we do, understand the second amendment rights. And we need to fear the bad guys with guns, not necessarily the good guys with guns and people who are doing so much on their own for being responsible for their security and their future.

It was a very positive experience. I think there is much to learn from the good and the determination of our good friends in the State of Israel. It was an enjoyable trip. I appreciate the opportunity of being able to have enjoyed it with my good friend from North Carolina.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

We all know that it is important to have people from very different perspectives serving in the Congress, and I think that the points of view that will be presented here sound very similar, but also each one of us has our unique perspectives on what stayed with us as a result.

One of the people who was with us on our trip was our distinguished deputy whip, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR), and I would like to ask the gentleman to share some of his views now.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for organizing tonight's Special Order. I congratulate her on her outstanding leadership and her participation in the trip that we all were on.

I have been to Israel many times. I went on this trip, and this particular trip was special, like most others, because there is always something going on with the people of that land and their neighbors. And there is a constant quest for peace and one that, unfortunately, has not come to pass in the half a century or so that that country has existed.

One thing that strikes me always and struck me this summer was that Israel remains a beacon of freedom, remains our only democratic ally in the Middle East, and is proof of the survival of a people that have engaged in the war on terror that we here in America have found ourselves in, especially since 9/11.

As the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) before me stated, we were able to travel to or near the Gaza Strip as the pullout, disengagement, was taking place. One of the visions that I remember was one that will go down in history, I imagine, with the settlers that were leaving Gush Katif, the area of

the Gaza Strip in which many Israeli communities existed. They were actually at one of the junctions in the road and were pulling down the traffic directional signs pointing to their community and putting the signs in the back of their truck, knowing probably that there would never be such a sign that existed again, because the community will not exist again. A very tragic moment in many families' lives, but I think something that reflects the bold move by Prime Minister Sharon in conducting the disengagement and formulating the policy of disengagement. It was a tremendous step. It was a tremendous step to create an environment where peace can flourish.

The problem is, and I am troubled by the Palestinian response to Mr. Sharon's move, because as we saw the Israeli Army pull out of the Gaza Strip, we then saw gunshots from the Palestinians in so-called celebration in what they had termed a "victory" that they had driven Israel out. We saw the transfer of arms across the border with Egypt into Gaza.

□ 1915

We saw the Palestinians conducting the burning of synagogues there in the communities that had been abandoned, and we saw and we read in the news while we were there that there were rockets being launched from the Gaza Strip into Israel, all in response or all coinciding with the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

So it just troubles me that we did not see an in-kind gesture by the Palestinian Authority, by Mahmoud Abbas and others in his administration, that would show some type of gesture of goodwill to reflect the Israeli disengagement and withdrawal from the Gaza Strip; but if we look throughout what has happened over the past decade or more, we see that there is a continued pattern of this type of response from the Palestinian Authority.

Way back in the beginning of the last decade, in the early 1990s, with the formulation of Oslo, there was a lot of hope, hope among a lot of people that the Oslo process would bring a long-sought-after peace between Israelis and the Palestinians. In fact, what happened after the devolution of that period was the intifada which was the killing of many innocent people on both sides.

We saw the occurrence of the Wye Accords in 1998 with Arafat and then Prime Minister Netanyahu, where Israel agreed to withdraw from Hebron, and it was a very holy place for the Jewish people; and the Palestinians responded with violence.

We saw in the year 2000, Camp David, potential of the accords between then Prime Minister Barak and Mr. Arafat. It was at that time that Israel offered nearly 90 percent of the West Bank, offered sovereignty to the Palestinian people, offered east Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. What happened? Mr. Arafat walked away, and we have seen

nothing but continued violence, continued terrorist attacks on the people of Israel.

Yet, after all of that, we see Prime Minister Sharon conducting the policy of disengagement, again taking one last stab at trying to achieve peace between the Israeli and Palestinian people. So I think that we must recognize that bold step.

Our President, who has been a terrific champion of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, understands the importance that Israel plays in our national security strategy, the fact that Israel is fighting the war on terror on the front lines while we, our young men and women in uniform, are fighting that same war on terror, not too far away in that region in Iraq and Afghanistan. This President understands the importance that Israel plays and has supported Mr. Sharon in his moves to try and move the peace process forward.

Unfortunately, we just are not seeing any reciprocation on the part of the Palestinians. We now hear and read of the reports where Hamas is taking a part and intending to participate in the Palestinian elections that will occur soon. How in the world can we respect the participation of a professed terrorist group whose aim is to remove Israel from the map? How in the world does that help the Palestinian cause for peace?

I am here tonight to express some serious dismay at the response by the Palestinian Authority and to reflect and congratulate the policies of Israel and what they are trying to do to secure peace. Unfortunately, there again has been nothing in return that Israel has received, and I just encourage my colleagues to continue to monitor what is going on in that region and how it affects our security here in America and to, once again, commit ourselves to helping the security of Israel in its democratic way and to ensure its survival as our only democratic ally in the Middle East.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR) so much. He has helped put many things that a lot of us are concerned about into perspective, and we are grateful to him for that.

I am going to talk a little bit more about Israel and give some facts about what is happening in Israel in its short history, but let me say that we know that Israel is one of the only countries in the Middle East that the United States can truly count on. It is not a fair weather friend. When terrorists strike American targets in the Middle East, Israel always stands by our side. We are truly fortunate to have a strong friend in Israel.

During our trip, we had the opportunity to travel to the countryside, visit military bases, universities, children's homes, holy sites, and strategic locations. One of the first things that struck me was just how much has been accomplished by the Israeli people in

their nation's short history. I witnessed capitalism at work and saw how it has enabled the country to prosper. Israel has an amazing network of roads, a national water system, and has developed other impressive infrastructure. It is really hard to believe that they have accomplished so much in just 55 years.

So often when we hear about Israel, it is only in conjunction with conflicts affecting Israel. My visit made me aware of so many facts that are never mentioned or discussed by the media. I want to share a few of those with my colleagues.

The Middle East has been growing date palms for centuries. The average tree is about 18 to 20 feet tall and yields about 38 pounds of dates a year. Israeli date trees are now yielding 400 pounds a year and are short enough to be harvested from the ground or a short ladder.

Israel, the 100th smallest country, with less than 1,000th of the world's population, can lay claim to the following: The cell phone was developed in Israel by Israelis working in the Israeli branch of Motorola which has its largest development center in Israel. Most of the Windows NT and XP operating systems were developed by Microsoft Israel. The Pentium MMX chip technology was designed in Israel at Intel. Both the Pentium 4 microprocessor and the Centrino processor were entirely designed, developed, and produced in Israel.

Voice mail technology was developed in Israel. Both Microsoft and Cisco built their only R&D facilities outside the United States in Israel. The technology for the AOL Instant Messenger ICQ was developed in 1996 by four young Israelis. Israel has the highest percentage in the world of home computers per capita.

According to industry officials, Israel designed the airline industry's most impenetrable flight security. U.S. officials now look, finally, to Israel for advice on how to handle airborne security threats.

Israel has the highest ratio of university degrees to the population in the entire world. Israel produces more scientific papers per capita than any other nation by a large margin.

In proportion to its population, Israel has the largest number of start-up companies in the world. In absolute terms, Israel has the largest number of start-up companies of any country in the world except the United States.

Israel is ranked number two in the world for venture capital funds, right behind the United States. Outside the United States and Canada, Israel has the largest number of NASDAQ-listed companies. It has the highest average living standards in the Middle East. The per capita income in 2000 was over \$17,500, exceeding that of the United Kingdom.

Twenty-four percent of Israel's workforce holds university degrees, ranking third in the industrial world, after the

United States and Holland. Twelve percent hold advanced degrees.

In 1984 and 1991, Israel airlifted a total of 22,000 Ethiopian Jews, called Operation Solomon, at risk in Ethiopia, to safety in Israel. Relative to its population, Israel is the largest immigrant-absorbing nation on Earth. Immigrants come in search of democracy, religious freedom, and economic opportunity.

Israel is the only country in the world that entered the 21st century with a net gain in its number of trees, made more remarkable because this was achieved in an area considered mainly desert.

Israel has more museums per capita than any other country. Israeli scientists developed the first fully computerized, no radiation, diagnostic instrument for breast cancer. An Israeli company developed a computerized system for ensuring administration of medications, removing human error from medical treatment. Every year in U.S. hospitals, 7,000 patients die from treatment mistakes.

Israel leads the world in the number of scientists and technicians in the workforce with 145 per 10,000 as opposed to 85 in the U.S., over 70 in Japan, and less than 60 in Germany. With over 25 percent of its workforce employed in technical professions, Israel places first in this category as well.

An Israeli company was the first to develop and install a large-scale solar-powered and fully functional electricity generating plant in Southern California's Mojave Desert; and as other people have alluded to, all of the above things have been done while Israel has been engaged in creating a very strong national defense with an implacable enemy that seeks its destruction and an economy continuously under strain by having to spend more per capita on its own protection than any other country on Earth.

Others have alluded to Israel's size. The entire country is smaller than the State of New Jersey. In fact, Israel is only 9 miles wide at its most narrow point. This helps illustrate how vulnerable the country is in terms of its security.

This point was also emphasized when we visited the Golan Heights. Israel became painfully aware of the location's strategic importance during the Yom Kippur War in 1973 when over 2,000 Israelis were killed. From atop this high mountain, enemies can launch rockets and artillery fire on the villages below. Israel's control of this piece of real estate is vital to its security interests.

We also had opportunities to walk the streets of Jerusalem and witness how closely the Jews and Arabs live together. This particular journey was also personally meaningful because I experienced the rich spiritual heritage of the Holy Land. It was humbling to see firsthand where Jesus Christ, King David, and King Solomon walked. I was also able to visit the sites of the Last

Supper and Christ's crucifixion. These were very moving experiences.

As my colleagues have mentioned, we met with a broad spectrum of Israeli and Palestinian officials, including Prime Minister Sharon and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. By talking to these leaders, we were able to gain fundamental insights on security, peace negotiations, and defense cooperation.

Israel has proved that it is willing to form a lasting peace with any country that has extended its hand in friendship. Indeed, one of the things that struck me most is that Israel does not say that it has an army. The media says it has an army; but in Israel, the people who protect Israel are called the Israeli Defense Force. Defense force. I think that is so important. Words are significant, and by calling folks who protect the country its defense force, it emphasizes that it wants peace and is not a country that is bent on fighting with its neighbors.

In the war on terror, American and Israeli interests are the same. We are both committed to stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and curbing state-sponsored terrorism.

□ 1930

For years, we have worked together for a more stable and peaceful Middle East.

Unfortunately, Israel has had to deal with war and terrorism since it was established in 1948, and has recently suffered through 4 intense years of violence that has targeted innocent civilians through suicide bombings on buses, in restaurants, and in shopping malls. I am saddened to report that Israel has endured more terrorist attacks than any other country in the entire world. The perseverance of the Israeli people, who constantly live their lives in the face of hatred and terrorism, is truly an inspiration to all of us who love freedom and democracy. The United States can learn a great deal from Israel's experience in fighting terror.

As we have already spoken of, just prior to my arrival in Israel, Prime Minister Sharon made the decision to disengage from Gaza and the northern West Bank. Israel has withdrawn thousands of citizens from their homes and communities and relocated them at tremendous emotional and financial cost to the Israeli Government. Disengagement from Gaza and parts of the West Bank hold enormous potential in advancing the peace process if the Palestinians demonstrate they can govern themselves and curb terrorism. Yet, while this movement has been supported by a majority of the public, it has been an emotionally painful undertaking that carries great political and security risks for Israel. Prime Minister Sharon explained that he was willing to take these risks because he believes that disengagement is in the best long-term interest of Israel.

After my rigorous and informative experiences overseas, I am more convinced than ever that it is crucial that the United States continue our strong support for Israel. The country is a beacon of democracy in a sea of violence and hostility. Both of our nations have a mutual interest in deterring terror, promoting democracy and stability throughout the world, and seeking peace in the Middle East. Israel's ability to function and defend itself against terrorism is in no small part due to unwavering support from the United States. Our country has a moral obligation to strengthen our fellow democracies, especially when they are in turbulent and dangerous regions in the world. It is in our national security interest to continue to support Israel financially and morally.

I want to end my remarks by quoting from a speech given by Prime Minister Sharon to the United Nations General Assembly on September 5, 2005. His final remarks are those that I think all Americans can agree with. "In a few days time on the Hebrew calendar, the New Year will begin, the 5,766th year since the Creation. According to Jewish belief, the fates of people and nations are determined at the New Year by the Creator, to be spared or to be doomed. May the Holy One, blessed be He, determine that this year, our fate and the fate of our neighbors is peace, mutual respect, and good neighborly relations."

That is a hope that all of us can share.

#### APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO SELECT BIPARTISAN COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE PREPARATION FOR AND RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan). Pursuant to section 2(a) of House Resolution 437, 109th Congress, and the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina:

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia, Chairman;

Mr. SENSENBRENNER of Wisconsin;  
 Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky;  
 Mr. SHAYS of Connecticut;  
 Mr. BONILLA of Texas;  
 Mr. BUYER of Indiana;  
 Mrs. MYRICK of North Carolina;  
 Mr. THORNBERRY of Texas;  
 Ms. GRANGER of Texas;  
 Mr. PICKERING of Mississippi;  
 Mr. SHUSTER of Pennsylvania.

#### UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order this evening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, more often than not, debates on public policy that take place in this Chamber are often characterized with a certain level of disagreement, thoughtful disagreement, and, hopefully, respectful disagreement. But tonight that is not the case. Tonight we put aside partisan disagreements to thank the men and women of the United States Coast Guard for a job well done.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, many Americans have come to know the Coast Guard and their personnel and their heroism and their professionalism. They have been made acutely aware about the services provided by this remarkable service, for it, I would suggest, has truly been one of the Coast Guard's finest hours. And I know I speak as well for my good friend and colleague from the Committee on the Judiciary, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), in expressing the profound gratitude of all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to represent southeastern Massachusetts, I believe home of some of the most beautiful and pristine coastline in all of New England and, in fact, in all of the United States, and also the birthplace of the United States Coast Guard. I happen to be a very proud veteran of the United States Coast Guard, like my colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina. Of course, he was an officer and a gentleman, while I was a mere enlisted man.

Back in 1997, my colleague and I, and another colleague, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), who also served in the United States Coast Guard, sat down and decided that it was time to bring together Members of Congress who are committed to life-saving, law enforcement, and environmental protection missions that were conducted at sea. So we created the Congressional Caucus of the United States Coast Guard. We did this to advocate for this outstanding service and to increase its profile not just in this institution but among the American people.

Well, their performance before, during, and in the aftermath of the tragedy which befell our Gulf States spoke volumes about the service that they provide to the American people. We learned a lot about the Coast Guard, or at least, and I am sure I speak for my friend who I will ask to say some words in a very few minutes, I know that for many, Hurricane Katrina increased their understanding of really what the Coast Guard is all about.

But it is not just about search and air rescues. In fact, they are the de facto lead agency for homeland secu-

rity, responsible for guarding 95,000 miles of American coastline and 361 ports. Every day, the Coast Guard interdicts, for example, drugs bound for the United States. In fact, just this past week, while performing their functions in the gulf and along the coastline of the Gulf States, the Coast Guard seized two tons of cocaine off the Colombian coast in South America, cocaine that undoubtedly would have been sold on the streets of our neighborhoods somewhere in this country.

But before I proceed, let me introduce a dear friend, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE), a veteran of the United States Coast Guard.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts, and I want to say a word or two about the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT).

First of all, I want to thank him for having taken out this Special Order. And by the way, he was an enlisted man and a gentleman. I too was an enlisted man and, hopefully, a gentleman; but my colleague and I became good friends, Mr. Speaker, as a result of our both serving on the Committee on the Judiciary. I learned one day early in the session that he was a Coast Guard veteran, and there are not that many of us around, as you know, in the Congress, and so we became good friends. I guess ideologically he and I are probably light years apart, but that has in no way hampered our friendship.

As my colleague knows, when Mother Nature rears her ugly head and devastation results therefrom, oftentimes accusatory fingers are forthcoming: Oh, it was not my fault; it was his fault or it was her fault. But that was not the case with the Coast Guard. I think in the wake of Katrina, the Coast Guard may well have been the only entity or agency that came out of that exercise free of fault and free of blame. The Coast Guard became America's hero.

Now, as the gentleman from Massachusetts pointed out, this certainly may well have been one of our finest hours. The landing ship tanks that were manned by Coast Guardsmen in World War II has oftentimes been called America's finest hour, and of course the day-to-day search-and-rescue operations that occur as a matter of fact are no big deal. Coasties go out and rescue distressed victims. No big thing for them. It is all in a day's work. But as my colleague pointed out, when we saw those heroic rescues by the Coast Guard air arm during Katrina, it was unbelievable.

It is a shame that it took a 9/11 or a Katrina for many Americans to become personal friends with the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard was the forgotten service. It was the fifth armed force, but rarely was much said about it. Oftentimes, and I am sure my colleague has been addressed in this manner, as have I, where Coast Guardsmen were referred to as members of the Hooligan Navy, the shallow-water sailors.