

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.