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History has taught us that evil ideologies must ultimately be defeated in the minds of human beings. But in the meantime, in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, they must often be defeated upon the battlefield.

The battle Israel fights in these days is a battle to protect all of humanity from an evil ideology that has no respect for innocent human life anywhere on the Earth. That is why, Mr. Speaker, Israel's war is our war, and if there is hope for peace and freedom in this world, free peoples across this world just unite to defeat this hellish ideology of terrorism. This time, Mr. Speaker, we must not wait too long.

So may the people of Israel take comfort in these days, knowing that America stands with you. May you find victory, and may the light of God's peace shine down upon the streets of Jerusalem, forever.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CONCERN ABOUT U.S. ARMS SALE TO PAKISTAN

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentlewoman from New York.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from New Jersey is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to express concern about the Bush administration's \$5 billion arms sale to Pakistan. Though little can be done to stop the deal, I believe the plan is misguided.

Considering the recent linkage of the Mumbai bombing to terrorist groups operating in Pakistan, this sale may further slow a 2-year peace process between India and Pakistan.

The government of India has made a strong commitment to fighting terrorism all over the world. Like the United States, nothing has deterred their firm policy to fight this regional and global menace. Unfortunately, Pakistan has not yet figured out a way to deter terrorist cells from growing within their borders.

We have to be careful where we are sending such highly sophisticated weaponry. While Pakistan has been an ally in the global war on terror, the government has simply watched while terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyaba committed terrorist acts in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India. Its actions within its own country proved themselves not fit for receiving these arms.

Mr. Speaker, foreign military assistance to Pakistan has been used against

India in the past. This new U.S. policy of military sales to Pakistan will contribute to increasing security concerns throughout South Asia, particularly in India. This material is not being used against al Qaeda, but there is a potential that it would be used in a war against India. We don't need to reward Pakistan for being our friend in the war on terrorism by giving them advanced weapons systems that are not likely to be used in that effort.

Pakistan has also faltered on proliferation in the past. In fact, just last week Pakistan announced that it is increasing its capacity to produce nuclear fuel, a move which signals a major expansion of the country's nuclear weapons capabilities. These reactors paired with some of our most highly technological jets and materials could be disastrous to the region.

Mr. Speaker, we may be supporting the Pakistani military, but we may also be increasing the rift in peace relations between India and Pakistan and in the South Asia region.

Mr. Speaker, economic assistance is certainly necessary to reform Pakistan's schools, provide health care programs and support economic restructuring that will stop Pakistan from being a breeding ground for terrorists. But military assistance is another matter. Allowing this sale sends the wrong message to the government and the people of India. I fear that it will mean a step backwards in U.S.-India relations and in South Asia's regional stability.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TACKLING THE IMPOSSIBLE? LAWMAKERS ADDRESS PHYSICIAN PAYMENT OVERHAUL

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor tonight to talk to my colleagues about a bill, H.R. 5866. This is a bill that will repeal the SGR, the formula by which physicians are paid under Medicare, and replace it with a more sustainable, more market-friendly Medicare economic index

which in fact reflects the actual costs of input for the physician delivering the care.

Mr. Speaker, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform and Quality Improvement Act of 2006 has four main goals: First, to ensure that physicians receive full and fair payment for services rendered; secondly, to create quality performance measures that allow patients to be informed consumers when choosing their Medicare provider; thirdly, to improve Quality Improvement Organization accountability and flexibility; and, fourth, to find reasonable methods of paying for these benefits.

Current law calculates an annual update for physician services based on the sustained growth rate, or SGR, as well as the Medicare economic index and the adjustment to bring the MEI update in line with the SGR target. When expenditures exceed the SGR target, the update for a future year is reduced. If expenditures fall short, the update for future years is increased. This is an economic incentive for physicians to limit health care spending.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the system simply doesn't work. Healthcare spending continues to grow and physicians exceed their target expenditures every year. Subsequently, Medicare reimburses them less and less. The net result is that patients have less and less access to their physicians, and those patients covered by Medicare arguably are our nation's most frail and complex patients.

This bill just introduced ends the application of the SGR January 1, 2007. Instead, we propose using a single conversion factor for Medicare reimbursement: The MEI, Medicare economic index, minus 1 percent. This eliminates the negative feedback loop that constantly creates a deficit in healthcare funding and introduces a more market sensitive system.

Regarding quality measures, the American Medical Association and other physician organizations have been working to create a relevant evaluation system for outpatient healthcare. In conjunction with these organizations, we propose creating a voluntary system of evidence-based quality measures.

Each physician specialty organization will create their own quality measures applicable to core clinical services which they will submit to a consensus building organization. Taken as a whole, these measures should provide a balanced overview of the performance. They will allow patients to better understand the quality of the healthcare providers they choose and be a fair assessment to reduce healthcare disparities across groups and regions. This will arm patients with critical information related to quality of care giving and give physicians a yardstick to measure their own performance and make improvements.

Additionally, these provisions largely follow the spirit of an agreement brokered between medicine and leaders on

the Hill when finalizing negotiations on the Deficit Reduction Act.

To offset the cost of these changes, we are looking at multiple options: Redirecting the stabilization fund from the Medicare Modernization Act provides some funds. Also Medicare currently pays for indirect costs of medical education twice, directly and by inflating payments to Medicare Advantage plans. By paying only once, we can find additional money.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit that there are other cost saving measures that can be employed, and we are certainly encouraging many groups across the healthcare spectrum to partner with us on this.

A recent article in CQ Healthbeat News from January 25th talks about the changes that might occur in the SGR. We had a hearing on Tuesday. The article says, "Tuesday's hearing may have marked progress of sorts, because not only were lawmakers at least talking about what was seemingly an intractable issue, but they actually offered some ideas for a down payment on a long-term fix.

"Offering a road map on the issue was legislation, H.R. 5866, that would erase the scheduled payment cuts while arming Medicare beneficiaries with more information on the quality of physician care.

"The bill would lower the MEI by 1 percentage point, which in 2007 would mean a payment increase of 2.7 percent. The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission called for an update based on the MEI of 3.7 percent in 2007 minus an adjustment fact of 0.9 percent, essentially the same number.

"The bill would also enact recommendations by the Institute of Medicine to improve Quality Improvement Organizations which contract with Medicare to improve quality of care under the program. The bill would make the quality improvement activities of QIOs available to all providers, guarantee a minimum of funding for QIOs and a required review of their resources when the organization's duties are expanded."

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a worthwhile bill. I think this Congress owes it to the patients and the physicians in this country that depend upon the Medicare system. We have done some great things with expanding the prescription drug program, but it is time to address some of the other shortcomings of the program.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WEINER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCDERMOTT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE TRUE FACTS IN REGARD TO PROGRESS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for one-half the remaining time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, today was an historic day on this House floor when we heard in a joint session of Congress from the Prime Minister of Iraq, Nouri Al-Maliki. The Iraqi people have spoken and their prime minister has spoken.

Last night during our special hour, Mr. Speaker, two of my colleagues from Georgia talked about the economic activity of this country and how well we have done under the policies of this President and this Republican leadership, and they termed that hour the truth hour as presented by the truth squad, to make sure the facts are presented to our colleagues and to the American people, the true facts.

What I would like to do in this short time that we have tonight, Mr. Speaker, is to talk about the true facts in regard to Iraq and the Iraqi people and why we need to continue to support them and not consider for a moment to bail out in these difficult times that they are continuing to go through.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just talk about some of the progress that we have made. I have got a couple of slides here that I would like to present.

First, just talking about the security in Iraq, Iraq's brutal former dictator, Saddam Hussein, as we all know, is behind bars and has been for the past couple of years. Just in the last couple of months, Mr. Speaker, the infamous, the notorious Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, was eliminated by United States troops, with the help, I might add, Mr. Speaker, of the Iraqi people, from actionable intelligence that we obtained from them.

The Iraqi Security Forces now number over 260,000, and they are participating in more than 90 percent, 90 percent, of all security operations in their

Nation. The Iraqi citizens are coming forth, as I say, with tips about insurgents like al-Zarqawi and terrorist activities, more than 4,500 tips in March of this year alone.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this infamous photograph of Zarqawi is recognized by every Member in this Chamber. And listen to his quote. "Americans are the most cowardly of God's creatures. They are an easy quarry. Praise be to God. We ask God to enable us to kill and capture them." This was a letter to al Qaeda in February of 2004. Thank our God that this infamous Zarqawi no longer exists and is no longer a threat to the Iraqi people and to our brave military that are fighting in Iraq.

Let me just speak a little bit about democracy, and, of course, the prime minister spoke to that so well today. Prime Minister Maliki serves as a democratically elected prime minister of Iraq. More than 70 percent of Iraq's citizens voted in a series of free and fair elections. The Iraqi citizens ratified a constitution and they elected the Iraqi National Unity Government. For the first time, women are part of the political process, holding 31 percent of the assembly seats. The number of judges has increased seven-fold.

Let's speak just a little bit about the society in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, this shows a picture, that famous picture of an Iraqi woman holding up that victory sign with that blue ink on her finger signifying that she has voted, having stood in line all day long. There were lots of terrorist attacks that day, yet the Iraqi people voted in a higher percentage than we Americans vote in a presidential election year.

Our troops are continuing to help the Iraqi people in building schools, sanitation projects and medical centers.

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The Iraqi people can now watch commercial television and read independent newspapers, signs of a growing freedom of speech.

Primary school enrollment has increased by nearly 3 million children. Iraqi medical schools are graduating 2,250 doctors each year. Unemployment is down dramatically. In the past 3 years, Iraq's GDP per capita has more than doubled.

More than 40 countries and international groups have established embassies or missions in Iraq to assist the developing democracy. Listen, Mr. Speaker, to some of the excerpts of the prime ministers speech to Congress today on the floor of this House, as he thanked the American people.

"Iraq will not forget those who stood with her and who continue to stand with her in times of need. Thank you for your continued resolve in helping us fight the terrorists plaguing Iraq, which is a struggle to defend our nascent democracy, and our people who aspire to liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. All of those are not just western values, they are universal values for humanity. They