

Madam Speaker, just this last July, when I visited Spain to meet with recently arrived former Cuban political prisoners, Leo, Leo Jr., and Rafa helped me to lend a hand to our heroes, the just-released-from-the-gulag former political prisoners. And that's typical of their generosity and their patriotism.

I send my deepest condolences to Dagmar, Mayte, Leo Jr., Rafa, and the entire wonderful family of Leopoldo Cifuentes. I will never forget him.

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.)

DESTROYING THEIR PROPERTY AND INSULTING THEIR INTELLIGENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, the trip taken by the U.S. delegation to the NATO summit in Lisbon was an expensive one indeed. The decision made there to extend our military occupation of Afghanistan into 2014 and possibly beyond will exact untold, unsustainable, unacceptable costs.

A war that has already tragically cost us 1,400 American lives will now take many hundreds more. A war that has already drained the Treasury of \$370 billion will drive us further into debt and stall our economic recovery. And a war that has undermined our national security goals will continue to make us less safe.

Here we are patting down holiday travelers at the airport while we escalate a war that is fomenting, rather than fighting, terrorism. That's the current state of our national security policy. Talk about missing the forest for the trees.

This decision to stay the disastrous course in Afghanistan represents a broken promise plain and simple, a promise that was to at least begin ending this war in July of next year. Meanwhile, as the timetable extends, the tactics seem to grow more violent.

Remember shock and awe in Iraq? Well, we are now engaged in what one American officer called, "Awe, shock, and firepower" in the form of enormous tanks now rolling into Afghanistan for the first time during this war. As if Afghans needed another reminder of the 1980s Soviet invasion, which was heavy on tank artillery, and left an indelible mark on the national consciousness.

The optics here, Madam Speaker, are very bad, and the rhetoric is disturbing as well, with one official boasting to the Washington Post, and I quote him, he said, "We've taken the gloves off." And another saying that counterinsur-

gency, and I quote him, "doesn't mean you don't blow up stuff or kill people who need to be killed." Of course, the problem is that we are killing a lot of people who don't need to be killed, innocent civilians caught in the cross-fire.

How exactly are we supposed to win people's hearts and minds when we are destroying their homes and exterminating their families? When will we understand that this kind of warfare, this entire war is the best propaganda tool the Taliban could ask for? And besides, Madam Speaker, tank deployment flies directly in the face of the COIN doctrine that is supposed to be guiding our Afghanistan strategy. We have all heard General Petraeus wax philosophical about U.S. troops moving within communities, helping forge a bond between the people and their government. Except that tanks and night raids are about just the opposite—removing our troops from Afghan communities in favor of launching deadly explosives from a safe distance.

But apparently NATO officials have come up with a creative way out of that contradiction. The Post reports that an Afghan farmer asked a general at a public meeting, "Why do you have to blow up so many of our fields and homes?" He was told that when villagers travel to town to submit a claim for property damage it helps better connect them to their government. Can you imagine a response more galling, Madam Speaker? Now we are not only destroying their property, we are insulting their intelligence, too.

This must end, it must end now. And Madam Speaker, we must bring our troops home. Our troops should have come home a long time ago.

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

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

MIAMI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL'S VENTILATOR ASSISTED CHILDREN'S CENTER CAMP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROSLEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROSLEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am so pleased, so pleased, to recognize the Miami Children's Hospital's Ventilator Assisted Children's Center Camp and congratulate them on their 25th anniversary.

This extraordinary camp serves children who depend upon medical technology to breathe. It gives them a chance to just be kids for a week.

Founded in 1986 by Dr. Moises Simpser, the camp has grown from serving 50 to over 250. This one magical week is the work of hundreds of volun-

teers and a year's worth of planning and preparation. The VACC Camp is the first of its kind in the Nation, and families come from across the country to participate.

For this 1 week every year, children who are usually all but confined to their hospital rooms and their homes can experience camp activities and a near-normal life. Packed with activities and field trips, this week is a week of firsts: First-time dancing, first-time bowling, first-time swimming. VACC Camp is not about what the campers cannot do; it's about what they can do.

Through a partnership with Shake-A-Leg Miami, the camp even developed a special sailboat that campers can steer with their chins, regardless of how much medical equipment they require. Other field trips include cruising on Biscayne Bay, shopping at Bayside Marketplace, a day at the beach, and lunch at the Hard Rock Cafe. Often this is the one time a year that these children have a chance to go outside in the fresh air and feel the sunshine on their faces.

At camp, volunteers make the week unique by putting on carnival nights and themed dance parties. But above all, the camp offers a chance to escape wheelchairs, medical tubes, and breathing equipment by going swimming. The process of getting each child into the pool takes over 20 minutes and five to six volunteers.

VACC camp is unique for the opportunities that it provides to its campers and their families. Caring for a child who is dependent upon technology to breathe puts an incredible amount of pressure on even the strongest of families. Parents are responsible for intensive 24-hour care without a day off.

Of all the difficulties of caring for a sick child, one of the most trying is social isolation. VACC Camp serves not just the kids but also their siblings and their parents. With programs like Parents' Dinner Out, this camp is a time to have fun and take a day off. What a luxury.

VACC Camp is an opportunity for these children and their parents to see that they are not alone, to build a community and a support structure.

Camp is a life-changing week for the families and the selfless volunteers who make it happen. Sponsored by Miami Children's Hospital and supported by hundreds of volunteers, VACC Camp is completely free for the families. The camp depends not only on the medical professionals who use their vacation days but also on its many teen volunteers. Local high school students interact with campers to make the week truly special and fun, and they leave the week with lifelong friendships. Camp is as much of a life-changing event for these high school students as it has been for the campers themselves.

I am so appreciative, Madam Speaker, of the hard work and the countless volunteers who come together to make this camp a magical week year after year.