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Tuesday, February 13, 2007

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Washington, DC – As the House began 36-hours of debate on the Iraq War, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) spoke on the floor in opposition to this war and in opposition to the President’s proposal to increase troop levels. The debate is over H. Con. Res. 63, a concurrent resolution expressing support for American troops and disapproval of the President’s plan to increase the number of troops in Iraq. In her remarks she also focused on her support of several responsible proposals to bring this war to a close, as well as the strain placed on the men and women of our Armed Forces.

Debate on the resolution began today, Tuesday, February 13, 2007 and each member who wishes to speak will be given five minutes on the Floor. Passage of the resolution is expected on Friday, February 16, 2007. [Click here to view the full text of the resolution.](#)

Below is the text of her extended remarks as submitted to the House record, ([Click here to view the delivered remarks](#)):

“Madame Speaker, this debate is long overdue. There is no issue more serious … or more urgent. The American People sent a message in the last election. That message was that they consider bringing this war to a close to be the singular imperative of their leaders.

“Yet rather than beginning to bring troops home, the President has proposed escalating this conflict … sending tens of thousands of additional troops to Iraq.

“Rather than change direction … they would instead continue down our current, disastrous path … only at a faster pace and with more human life placed in harm’s way.

"This week, every Member of the House of Representatives will have an opportunity to let their constituents know where they stand on the President's proposed escalation. That is only right.

"The American people deserve to know where their elective representatives stand on this, the most critical issue at this moment of our history.

"Madame. Speaker, here's where I stand. I opposed this war from the beginning, and I support several responsible proposals to bring this war to a close.

"I believe the President's proposed escalation would be a tragic mistake. His stubborn insistence on pursuing the present course has been rejected by our military leaders … the independent Iraq study group … and a strong majority of the public. And with good reason.

"This escalation will most likely result in an increase in violence while only postponing the hard political choices the Iraqi people must make.

"Escalation of this conflict will also increase the strain on a military that is already stretched to the breaking point.

"Madame Speaker, it is critically important to make clear that Iraq has spiraled into civil war because of the failure of this country's political leadership … NOT our troops.

"Our brave men and women in uniform have done everything that has been asked of them.

They courageously put their lives on the line every day for us.

"The real tragedy is how ill-served our men and women in uniform have been by their political leadership.

"I have heard firsthand from many families in Sacramento about the impact this has had on their lives.

"In 2005, I spoke with a group of women whose husbands were serving in the National Guard in Iraq.

"One woman told me she bought her husband a Kevlar vest before he deployed … something all too many families were doing for their loved ones because the military wasn't providing it.

Imagine the stress … sending a loved one into danger without the confidence that he would be given the needed equipment for protection.

"And I have heard countless stories about the hardships being created by the multiple tours this conflict has demanded.

"Linda, a concerned mother from Sacramento, told me about her son, Nicholas, who serves as an Army sergeant in the 82nd Airborne in Germany. He lives on-base with his wife and two children, ages four and five. Another child is on the way.

"Nicholas recently learned that he was going to have to return to Iraq for his THIRD tour.

"Linda wrote me and said that his family … and I'm quoting … ‘… will be all alone in Germany when he leaves and each time he has gone, the children have terrible nightmares and anger issues because they do not understand the long separations.’

"Another Sacramento couple that wrote me are the proud parents of three Army soldiers … one is currently serving his second tour in Iraq … the other two have already completed two tours in Iraq. They ask … will their sons be asked to go back a third time?

"My friend Richard Beach served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserves in Iraq. Richard served in Iraq early in the conflict, and realized that four years since he went there, many of his fellow reservists are still serving there.

"Richard shared with me a note he sent to some of his fellow members of the 114th. He wrote … and I quote … ‘I remember four years ago we were getting ready for our trip to Fort Lewis and then on to Iraq. I hope as the fourth anniversary of the war comes up you are all in good health and living life to the fullest. I too pray that soon this war will end, and we will stop sending our soldiers off to war.’

"Four years later … and still many of the same soldiers and their families are making the same sacrifice. But that is the heartbreaking reality here.

"There are some 30 soldiers in the Sacramento area who have died in this war. I've met several times with members of the National Guard and Reserve and their families. Every member knows what I am talking about. We've all done it. We all know the pain.

"The notion of "shared sacrifice" is something that helped make this country great.

"But with this Administration … only our soldiers and their families share in the sacrifice.

"In conclusion, Madame Speaker, it is important to note that this country has tried troop increases before … to no avail. Sadly, this Administration simply lacks credibility when arguing that this proposal will work.

"As a result of this Administration's failure to meet the most basic requirements of responsible leadership, it has abdicated any claim to deference from this chamber on this war … and it has certainly relinquished the moral authority to send additional men and women into this catastrophe.

"Today's step is only a first step. Undoubtedly, this chamber will need to take more forceful action if we are to bring this war to a conclusion. But it is an important first step. .

"I urge my colleagues to support this resolution … and to oppose this gravely mistaken proposal to escalate the war."

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