

For my colleagues here in Congress and every American throughout the Nation, I reiterate the words of Mission Control upon *Atlantis'* return, "Welcome home, Shannon, we are proud of you."

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SKAGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. SKAGGS 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 Indiana [Mr. MCINTOSH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. MCINTOSH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

SEQUENCE OF SPECIAL ORDER

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to proceed out of order with my 5-minute special order.

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

There was no objection.

UNITED STATES ROLE IN IRANIAN ARMS TRANSFERS TO CROATIA AND BOSNIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. HYDE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform the House of the serious problem that has come to my attention as chairman of the select subcommittee of the House Committee on International Relations established to look into the Clinton administration's policy of giving Iran a green light in setting up military assistance programs in Croatia and Bosnia.

We are well along in our investigation and hope to have a report ready to share with the House and the public next month. I can guarantee you that if we can manage to get the administration to cooperate concerning the rules of classification, that report will make very interesting reading. It will document an incredibly ill-advised policy that was conceived and executed in an incredibly inept manner.

Moreover, and more importantly, it will lay out for all to see the tragedy in the making that is its legacy, a well-entrenched and hostile Iranian foothold in Europe. The Iranian presence and influence, pervasive in some of the

highest circles of the Bosnian Muslim political leadership, is now playing havoc with our policymakers trying to implement the Dayton accords and our military trying to keep the lid on violence in the region. This cloud of Iranian influence and the terrorist infrastructure it has fostered in this part of Europe are, and will remain, very real threats to the West for years to come.

The problem I wish to bring to your attention concerns the difficulty our subcommittee has had in trying to pry loose information that must be shared with the American people if they are to understand our findings. The administration is doing this by hiding behind the rules of classification. That is, they are insisting that important information is classified and cannot be shared with the American people due to concerns of its compromising national security.

What sort of information am I talking about? The names of intelligence agents? No. Information on our military's capabilities? No. What we are talking about are embarrassing little comments and facts.

We are talking about secrets that look like this.

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This is one of three documents we asked the administration several months ago to declassify for our report. After over a month of deliberation, the State Department refused to declassify two of them, and, for this one, they selectively declassified 60 percent of the text. What then is in the 40 percent they deleted?

Well, I cannot tell you exactly, because the administration says it is classified. I can let you know in the most general terms it includes such things as an embarrassing comment by a senior Department of State official on his department's performance in formulating the policy that gave Iran a green light into coming into the Balkans. It contains an embarrassing statement about the administration's ability or inability to reach a decision on policy guidance to issue an ambassador. It contains a statement whether or not to interpose itself between a foreign government and the Iranians. It also contains an embarrassing statement about whether or not the administration would advise our allies who have troops on the ground in Bosnia of a decision that could affect the safety of those troops.

I ask then, is this classification to protect the national security, or is it to avoid embarrassment and avoid admitting mistakes?

This administration has made a great hullabaloo about declassifying information. Openness has been its byword. When it comes to sensitive military information, the motto has been when in doubt, declassify.

Well, unfortunately, that is not how it works in practice. I invite the administration to live up to its fine rhetoric. In its public pronouncements of

openness, the administration went so far as to issue a new executive order specifically stating it shall be illegal to use the rules of classification to "conceal violations of law, inefficiency or administrative error," or "to prevent embarrassment to a person, organization or agency."

That is from Section 1.8 of the Clinton Administration's Executive Order 12958. Accordingly, I have referred this matter today to the Information Security Oversight Office and the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel for investigation and appropriate action.

Finally, I wish to assure the House that we will continue to investigate the administration's efforts at providing the Iranians a unique opportunity, that amounted to a franchise for insinuating and entrenching themselves into a very vulnerable and volatile part of Europe.

UPCOMING BIPARTISAN RETREAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. SAWYER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SAWYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in company with our colleague from New York, Mr. HOUGHTON, to report to the House on the work that a number of us have been doing and many Members are aware of to put together a bipartisan retreat on the weekend of February 28 through March 2 in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

This work has come about as a result of the efforts of many Members, but I particularly want to mention the work, in addition to AMO and myself, of DAVE SKAGGS and RAY LAHOOD, who, together, have worked to develop this effort to bring together not only Members, but our families and our children, in a period of time when we can overcome some of the barriers that we have encountered in recent years to getting to know one another on a human level, on a personal basis, to understand the kinds of things that motivate us, to recognize the honesty of even differing opinions, in a way that can help to build the civility of this Chamber and elevate the quality of public discourse.

The planning group for this effort includes other Members. It includes Mr. STENHOLM, Ms. CLAYTON, Mr. LaHood, Mr. HOUGHTON, Mr. SKAGGS, Mr. DREIER, and Mrs. FOWLER, in an effort to use these last several weeks of this session to put together the logistics, including the site and the travel plans for this weekend at the end of February.

I believe that there is an enormous appetite for this kind of effort. People across not only this Chamber, but throughout the country, have commented on the wide variation in the level of discourse that we have encountered in recent years, and many of us believe that some of that can be overcome, not solved, but overcome, by simply getting to know one another