

"For the Bush administration," this is all a quote, "it has been a mantra, one the President intones repeatedly: America's troops will get whatever they need to do the job. But as Iraq's liberation has turned into a daily grind of low intensity combat and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld grudgingly raises troop levels, many soldiers who are there say the Pentagon is failing to protect them with the best technology America has to offer. Especially tanks, Bradleys, and other heavy vehicles, even in some cases body armor. That has been the tragic lesson of April, a month in which a record 115 U.S. soldiers have died so far, and 879 others have been wounded, 560 of them fairly seriously.

"Soldiers in Iraq complain that Washington has been too slow to acknowledge that the Iraqi insurgency consists of more than 'dead-enders.' And even at the Pentagon many officers say Rumsfeld and his brass have been too reluctant to modify their long-term plans for a lighter military. On the battlefield, that has translated into a lack of armor. Perhaps the most telling example: a year ago the Pentagon had more than 400 main battle tanks in Iraq; as of recently, a senior defense official told Newsweek, there was barely a brigade's worth of operational tanks still there. (A brigade usually has about 70 tanks.)"

How about this: "According to an unofficial study by a defense consultant that is now circulating through the Army, of a total of 789 Coalition deaths as of April 15, (686 of them Americans), 142 were killed by land mines or improvised explosive devices, while 48 others died in rocket-propelled grenade attacks. Almost all of those soldiers were killed while in unprotected vehicles, which means that perhaps one in four of those killed in combat in Iraq might be alive if they had had stronger armor around them, the study suggested."

I want to repeat that: "One in four of those killed in combat might be alive if they had had stronger armor around them, the study suggested. Thousands more who were unprotected have suffered grievous wounds such as the loss of limbs."

I guess it was a week ago Sunday I attended a meeting in my district of 500 people organized by Military Families Speak Out, who have a website that has actually provided a lot of comfort to some of the families who feel quite alone in this situation, Military Families Speak Out. There was an aunt of a soldier who went down in an Illinois National Guard Chinook helicopter on November 2, 2003. This helicopter was not equipped with the latest automatic antimissile blocking system. That is partly because the National Guard is lower down the list on who gets the really good equipment.

Finally, let me quote from a letter from a soldier that was in the Peoria Journal Star, actually. He said, "Our unit's tour of duty in Iraq has been extended past our one-year mark. This is

not in line with what our supposed leaders have proposed.

"Let your readers know as well that this unit does not have the extra armor that is now required for vehicle convoys." This is April 24, 2004. "Even though we have been here for over a year, we still do not have the right protection from roadside bombs or small-arms fire. Our doors are basically just two sides of sheet metal."

He says, "I would like to get home and continue my life, as our Congressmen are doing with theirs. Members of," and he mentions his company, "have done our time here in Iraq with honor, and now we are ready to go home."

So, Mr. President, it seems to me that the mistake was made and is still being made, and cries out for a remedy. The least we ought to do is what you promised, and that is that our troops will have everything they need. They still do not. They must. And that is the least that we can do for our soldiers. For those of us who were against the war from the beginning or those who supported the war, all of us support our troops. It is a mistake not to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART 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 Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE 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 Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HENSARLING 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 the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

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

There was no objection.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF PAT TILLMAN

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

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Pat Tillman, a San Jose native who was killed in action last week in Afghanistan.

At a time when many of us in this country talk about sacrifice, about devotion, about courage, we can look to Pat Tillman as a man who lived those ideals. The consummate student athlete, Pat excelled in the classroom and on the gridiron at Leland High School in San Jose. He graduated summa cum laude from Arizona State University while earning the honor of Pac-10 defensive Player of the Year of 1997. He was a loyal friend, a dutiful son, and a devoted brother.

By now, many of my colleagues have heard about Pat's selfless decision to join the Army Rangers, a decision that required him to turn his back on a multi-million dollar contract offer to continue playing professional football for the Arizona Cardinals.

Pat wanted to serve his country. He wanted to be a direct part of our national response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

In a society that reveres athletes as heroes, that hypes sporting events as mythic battles between warring foes, Pat Tillman wanted to serve his country as a soldier.

His enlistment in May of 2002 drew media attention, but Pat very deliberately avoided the publicity that followed his decision. For him, joining the Rangers was a matter of duty and honor, not an opportunity to generate fanfare for himself.

Instead of seeking special recognition for his own actions, Pat shifted attention to the men and women serving in the armed forces. Alongside his brother Kevin, Pat served in Afghanistan where Coalition forces continue to search for Osama bin Laden.

Last Thursday, near a village approximately 25 miles southwest of a U.S. military base, Pat was killed in a firefight when his unit came under attack.

Pat Tillman has made the ultimate sacrifice. The selflessness and patriotism he displayed in his short life will serve as a model to all Americans. For the people of San Jose, he is a native son lost in the field of battle. For Americans across the country, he represents the ideals of duty, honor, and courage.

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

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