

I ask my colleagues to try to imagine this village we see in this picture completely submerged in water, completely covered in fetid, disease-ridden floodwater. Father Tom said you can no longer see the houses above the water. All you can see is part of a cistern from the water project we visited that day.

Clearly, the people of Haiti need our help, now more than ever. This bill today is taking a number of steps that will aid the Haitian people. I congratulate Senator MCCONNELL and Senator LEAHY, the chairman and ranking member, for their great work.

With this recent disaster, the needs of the people of Haiti—food, water, and medicine—will even be greater.

I thank all my colleagues who have been so supportive of the efforts to help bring Haiti back to its feet. I ask them today for their continued support. I ask everyone for their prayers as well. This is a very difficult situation that the people of Haiti face today. The situation Father Tom described is clearly one that necessitates the United States and the international community to become even more involved, to get food in there, to get good water in there, and then be involved in helping to rebuild, in helping these people put their lives back together.

OHIO FLOODING

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I want to also add that while there is a great deal of misery and suffering going on in Haiti right now because of the flooding, my home State of Ohio is also hurting. Several large regions of our State—the southern part, the eastern part—have also been very hard hit.

At least seven people we know of have died as a result of flooding since August. The hurricane has hit Ohio and has caused quite a toll. I will be traveling in some of that region in Ohio tomorrow to take a look myself. My representative Karen Sloan has been on the scene. She represents me out of my Marietta office, but she has been traveling throughout that region for a number of days and has been reporting back to me daily.

The people on the ground have been doing a great job, a courageous job. I congratulate them. It is going to take a lot of time to get things back up and running in a number of communities that have been hardest hit. I commend Governor Taft. I commend the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. I commend the men and women of the Ohio National Guard. I also commend the local officials who have worked so tirelessly, but also the countless volunteers and organizations who have worked to try to help the people who have been put out of their homes, people who have lost property, and people who have lost their loved ones. I congratulate them and thank them for the great work they have done. A lot of work still remains to be done in Ohio, as I know there does in many other States as well.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

ARMY STAFF SERGEANT PAUL MARDIS

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I have come to the floor this afternoon to pay tribute to a man who gave his life in service to our Nation fighting to protect his family, his fellow soldiers, and the Iraqi people. He was a brave young man who was mature certainly beyond his years.

Army SSG Paul Mardis served in the Army's 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group based out of Fort Campbell, KY. He was seriously injured in May when he was in northern Iraq and a bomb exploded next to his Humvee. Paul was transferred to Walter Reed Army Medical Center to recuperate. Although he fought valiantly to regain his strength, he came down with pneumonia and, tragically, his body was too weak to fight back. He passed away on July 15, 2004. He was only 25 years old.

Since his death, I have learned a lot about Paul Mardis. Perhaps most inspiring is that in his all too brief 25 years on this Earth, Paul lived life to the fullest. He accomplished many things of which people twice his age could only dream.

Paul was not someone who had things handed to him, either. His life was not always easy. He faced adversity early in his life, and even as a child he learned to cope better than most adults ever could. Paul's parents died when he was growing up. He was 10 when he lost his father and 14 when he lost his mother. If dealt that hand, many people might have become withdrawn and bitter, perhaps, but certainly not Paul. He continued to work hard at school, excel as a football player, and developed a level of maturity uncommon at any age.

Following the death of his parents, Paul went to live with his sister Sherri and her husband Tollison. Paul left the life he knew in Coshocton, OH, and moved to Florida. He finished high school there, graduating from Palmetto High in 1997. Though initially he did not want to make the move to Florida—I guess that is understandable with someone his age—Paul made the best of the situation and kept in touch with his friends in Coshocton, especially a young woman named Kacey, whom he would eventually marry in October of 2002.

After graduation, Paul attended Manatee Community College for a time. He knew he needed to earn more money to complete his college degree, so he decided to join the Army. Paul enlisted in September 1998 as an indirect fire infantryman, but he aspired to join the Special Operations Forces. He reached this goal when he became a Green Beret in 2001. SFC Don Kabrich, who served with Paul, once said that "Special Forces put our group through an assessment selection process. It's 3 weeks of circumstances and situations that take the cover off an individual, and you see who's inside. They found the best of the best in Paul."

One of the most impressive things about Paul was that if anyone had a

right to boast about his skills and accomplishments, it was certainly Paul Mardis. But he never did. He did not brag. He did not boast. He quietly went about his job—and doing it well, I might add.

Unbeknownst to his family, Paul had earned several awards in the short time he had been in the Army. He was awarded two Bronze Stars for Valor in Combat, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, a Purple Heart, and had successfully completed all the schools of the elite forces, including graduating with honors from basic airborne school. Despite the accolades, Paul remained modest. When a nurse called him a hero as he lay recovering in the hospital, Paul insisted that he was nothing special, that he was just doing his job. But, Mr. President, we know better.

Paul touched the lives of all those with whom he came in contact, including Iraqis whom he barely knew. When Baghdad fell, Paul was part of a Special Forces liaison to the emerging political parties. At age 24—24—he was actively working to restructure a foreign government, an amazing accomplishment for anyone, but particularly someone his age.

Although he had many professional successes, Paul cultivated personal relationships in the Army that were very dear to him. Paul's Army buddies fondly remember him. They liked to joke that he was an "organizational fanatic." After finding old receipts tucked away in a filing cabinet, Paul took it upon himself to reinvent his unit's filing system. SSG Mark Conant, Paul's comrade, commented:

I believe Paul has entered the pearly Gates of Heaven and relieved St. Peter of his duties to get people through the gates more efficiently.

Conant and others also described Paul as an asset to the team and as a great friend.

I had the privilege of meeting Paul's family and some of his friends. His sister Sherri remembered that Paul never did anything halfway. He always went above and beyond what was expected. This is undeniable. Paul answered our Nation's call to serve and did whatever was needed.

It is impossible to honor Paul the way he deserves. The nature of his sacrifice will not allow it. I know that my words must fall short and my words must be inadequate. With that in mind, though, I would like to conclude with the words of Paul's wife Kacey. She said this about her beloved husband:

Paul was a brave individual who put his life on the line so that we could be free. He loved his country, fellow soldiers, and believed in what he was doing. We can go to sleep at night knowing that the world is a safer place because of people like Paul who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for our country. He was a true American hero.

Though Paul Mardis never wanted to call himself a hero, he could not be more deserving of the title.