

from 50 acres to 575 acres and he helped shepherd the construction of a new 43,500 square foot library.

Mike is a consummate professional and a talented leader. We all thank him for his work.

AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTH

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, the month of March is a time for us to officially recognize the essential role the American Red Cross plays in our communities. 2006 is a special year for the Red Cross, as we commemorate its 125th year of making our country safer, healthier and more secure. In honoring the national organization of the Red Cross, we must also recognize the local chapters that work tirelessly to achieve these goals, such as the Red Cross of Southern Maryland, now in its 80th year of service.

The Southern Maryland Red Cross, and the Nation, faced new challenges in 2005. The deadly tsunami in late 2004 tested the character and will of the international community, and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita uprooted families and communities. Throughout every trial we faced, the Red Cross was there to help ease suffering and aid recovery. These dedicated people were first in line to help families and individuals, friends and strangers.

The Southern Maryland Red Cross faced not only the national disasters of 2005, but ones that hit closer to home. The response they provided is a testament to the kindness of any American touched by tragedy. The citizens of Southern Maryland rolled up their sleeves to donate over 7,000 units of blood and gave donations to aid the victims of 200 house fires. They learned CPR, lifesaving skills, and first aid techniques. They volunteered their time, money and hearts to anyone who needed help. And they did not just aid their neighbors at home, but also those abroad, allowing over 200 military personnel to communicate with their families in Maryland.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the Southern Maryland Red Cross are no different from you or me. They have full time jobs, families, and responsibilities at home. What makes these Americans so extraordinary is that they have selflessly taken time out of their lives to help schools, workplaces, families, and any person who needs a hand. The Southern Maryland Chapter consists of 200 volunteers and donors, but it responds to the needs of a nation.

The Southern Maryland Red Cross brings aid and recovery, gives hope and comfort, and inspires Americans to reach out when help is needed. I feel assured knowing that the Southern Maryland Chapter is working every day to better the lives of my fellow Maryland residents. We must all do our part to recognize the vitality of the Red Cross and ensure that they are ready to help us respond to the challenges that lie ahead.

In honor of the Southern Maryland Chapter of the Red Cross, I would like to take this time to officially recognize March as American Red Cross Month. Whether it is a donation of time, money or courage, the American Red Cross is there for us. This March is a time to stand up and recognize their continued service.

I encourage all Americans to show their commitment to the Red Cross by donating money or volunteering their time at one of the many local chapters across the country.

RECOGNIZING THE FIRST U.S.-KOREA STRATEGIC CONSULTATION FOR ALLIED PARTNERSHIP

HON. VITO FOSSELLA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, when President George Bush traveled to South Korea late last year to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, APEC, Summit in Busan, he and President Moo-Hyun Roh agreed that while the strategic partnership and evolving security alliance between our two nations were "mutually beneficial," increased and more efficient communication were still required.

Against this backdrop, Presidents Bush and Roh agreed to launch a strategic dialogue called Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership, SCAP, at the ministerial level for consultations on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. Currently, the U.S. only holds such consultations with Australia, Saudi Arabia and Japan.

The first of these meetings took place in Washington on January 19, 2006, when South Korea's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ki-Moon Ban, met with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. According to the State Department, among the key initiatives Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Ban laid out as topics for continued discussion include: coordination of efforts to promote freedom, democratic institutions and human rights worldwide; strengthened cooperation on fighting terrorism and exerting common efforts for the observance and implementation of international security cooperation regimes for the prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; coordination of efforts to develop comprehensive international strategies to fight transnational pandemic disease; maintaining a strong U.S.-ROK alliance to contribute to peace and stability in Northeast Asia; and developing common approaches to reinforcing peace and stability through multilateral peacekeeping and improved collaboration on crisis response and disaster management.

It is clearly evident that the shared agenda of the United States and South Korea is both broad and comprehensive. South Korea is one of our country's principal trading partners, with over \$72 billion in trade volume each year and the fifth-largest purchaser of U.S. agricultural products. In fact, on Thursday, February 2, 2006, the U.S. and Korea announced the launching of negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement, FTA, which would represent, according to U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman, the "most commercially significant" free trade pact since NAFTA.

Moreover, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, during the 2004 calendar year, 627,000 South Koreans visited the United States for tourism and business travel, making Korea the fifth largest overseas market of tourists coming to our shores. As cochair of the Congressional Caucus on Korea, I am also well aware that Korea has made great progress in working to meet all the statutory

requirements for entry into the Visa Waiver Program, VWP.

The United States and South Korea also share a deep concern about regional stability and continued peace on the Korean Peninsula. At the same time, South Korea has been an important and indispensable ally in the global war on terror and in bringing peace, stability and democracy to Iraq. In fact, South Korea has deployed more troops in Iraq than any other country besides the United States and Great Britain.

Mr. Speaker, for all these reasons, the first Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership was an important contribution to strengthen the U.S.-Korea bilateral relationship and expand the horizon of the alliance. I also commend Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Ban on their pledge to continue sustaining the formative discussions as their joint efforts deserve our full recognition and support.

HONORING SERGEANT DENNIS KRAMER AND SPECIALIST JOSEPH DELAPP

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, America has always relied on the men and women of our Armed Services to keep us free. Quite simply, without them the greatest bastion of freedom on this planet would not exist. We can never thank them enough.

Today I ask my colleagues to honor two men who have served America with distinction.

Sergeant Dennis Kramer received the distinguished honor of Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for 2004.

Specialist Joseph Delapp was awarded the esteemed Soldier of the Year for 2004.

Sergeant Dennis Kramer of Baudette, Minnesota enlisted in May 2001 and is serving in the 1/187th Infantry Regiment at Fort Campbell as a reconnaissance squad leader. During Operation Enduring Freedom, he served as a rifleman in A Company of the 1/187 and upon redeployment he volunteered for the scout platoon where he served as a sniper and sniper section squad leader during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Specialist Joseph Delapp of Mayfield, Kentucky was awarded Battalion Soldier of the month in August 2004 and Brigade Soldier of the Year 2004. Formerly in D Company 2/327 Infantry, Delapp is now the Commanding General's Driver, and a Noncommissioned Officer. Delapp entered the Army on January 31, 2002 and was deployed in March 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom where he served as a driver and a gunner.

Mr. Speaker, now we owe a debt of gratitude to these men and to their families. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating these outstanding members of our military and thank them for their dedication to defending our country. God Bless the U.S. Armed Forces.