

sapping strength from U.S. domestic priorities such as health care, education, energy independence, all much needed here at home. Unfortunately, the report begins with this sentence, and I quote: "The U.S. has long-term relationships and interests at stake in the Middle East," but then, amazingly, fails to identify them. Obviously, one of them is oil. And the U.S., again, does not commit itself in this report to a strong effort to restore America's energy independence here at home.

In addition, the report is very iffy on how the oil bounty of Iraq, which has the second largest set of reserves in the entire world, will be handled in the future. Though it makes suggestions on how to manage that oil reserve, the prospects of that being accomplished are quite remote. The report makes many recommendations that apply in Iraq, but not to end America's chief strategic vulnerability, our dependence on imported petroleum surely from the Middle East.

Importantly, the report places the Iraq situation in a regional context, explaining how what is happening in Iraq is operating to harm America's standing throughout the Middle East. It states how tepid international support is for the U.S. engagement in Iraq, despite the President's acclamations that there is a coalition of the willing.

In addition, the report acknowledging that for the United States to draw down forces, Iraqi units must replace them. And then the report details that the 138,000 Iraqi Army troops and 188,000 police units have some state of readiness. Half of them are not up to the task, with many functions infiltrated by the opposition.

The report presents a confusing picture on the issue of how long the United States might need to maintain its presence in Iraq. It recommends unit withdrawal by 2008 at some level. But then, in a different section, the report states that not all U.S. combat brigades would be needed in the future for force protection for backing up Iraqi units, but, of course, says many units would still be needed. At least that is the inference, but it doesn't say how many.

In the end, it fails to address the issue of how many combat units would actually be needed and, therefore, leaves the door open for an extended U.S. presence.

Admitting the difficulty it will entail, the report recommends restoring broken diplomatic relations with nations the administration has publicly ridiculed, such as Syria and Iran, as well as factions within Iraq and throughout the region with which the administration has no dialogue, such as Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi faction. The report properly identifies the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict as paramount to reaching a regional peace settlement, stating clearly that neither Democrats nor Republicans would ever abandon Israel, but making strong recommendations on how to restore the peace process.

The report also makes some statements I find implausible. One is that only 5,000 civilian contractors are operating in Iraq, from hired guns to transportation specialists, when in fact that number now exceeds over 100,000, and represents a serious and worrisome departure from past U.S. military operations. If that private presence morphs into a mercenary force that occupies Iraq as the U.S. military withdraws, this would be a first in American history and a development I would not welcome.

Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed to read that at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, which was the largest in the world with over 1,000 employees, only 33 Americans speak Arabic. This is shocking and dangerous and another indication of the shocking mismanagement of the U.S. mission in Iraq.

URGING A PRESIDENTIAL PARDON FOR TWO U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS

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

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor tonight to bring to the attention of the House a situation involving two U.S. Border Patrol agents. Agent Ramos and Compean were found guilty in a Federal court for wounding a Mexican drug smuggler who brought 743 pounds of marijuana across our southern borders into Texas. These agents never should have been prosecuted for their actions last year, yet they have been sentenced to 11 and 12 years in Federal prison respectively. On January 17 of 2007, both agents will enter Federal prison unless action is taken to overturn their sentences.

Agent Ramos served the Border Patrol for 9 years, and was a former nominee for Border Patrol Agent of the Year.

Agent Compean had 5 years of experience as a border agent. By attempting to apprehend an illegal alien drug smuggler, these agents were simply doing their job to protect the American people. These agents should have been commended for their actions, but instead the U.S. Attorney's Office prosecuted these agents and granted full immunity to the drug smuggler for his testimony against our agents.

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The drug smuggler received full medical care in El Paso, Texas, was permitted to return to Mexico, and is now suing the Border Patrol for \$5 million for violating his civil rights. Ladies and gentlemen of the House, he is not an American citizen, he is a criminal.

On October 26, an article by Sara Carter of the Los Angeles News Group, quotes two of the drug smuggler's family members who said, "He has been smuggling drugs since he was 14 years of age and would not move drugs unless

he had a gun on him, and he has been bragging about the money he is going to get in a lawsuit every time we talk to him."

While this habitual drug smuggler goes free, the families of the two El Paso Border Patrol agents have struggled to cope for almost 2 years with this unjust prosecution and conviction.

On October 18, an article by Sara Carter, she describes the devastation that has fallen upon the Ramos family, stating, and I quote, "They have almost lost their home on several occasions, they no longer have medical insurance, and most of the money raised for them will go to attorneys when they appeal the case."

I further quote, "Threats from associates of . . . [the drug smuggler] have left the Ramoses fearful for their children's safety. The El Paso Sheriff's Department has had deputies monitoring the Ramos family since the threats came by e-mail and phone."

The article reports, "Ramos first thought when the smuggler turned to him was of his wife and three young sons. He shot at the smuggler to save his life and his partner's, he said." Although it is clear that the agents fired shots to defend themselves and the border that they patrol, Ramos and Compean were convicted mainly on the testimony of a drug smuggler who claimed he was unarmed.

A sealed indictment for the drug charges forbade the defense from calling into question the integrity of the drug smuggler as a witness. Despite my repeated requests for an investigation of this case, and a request from dozens of Members of Congress to pardon the agents, this administration has ignored the concerns of countless citizens who have decried the unjust prosecution of these two heroes.

Members of Congress and the American people are outraged and concerned with this administration's indifference to the plight of these two honorable men who have been crucified unfairly by a Federal prosecutor. By using the power of his office to pardon these two agents, the President has the opportunity to immediately reverse a grave injustice. These two agents have given years of their life to service to this Nation, and have been unjustly punished for doing their job to protect our homeland.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, many in Congress and the people of America are asking the President to please consider our request and to pardon these two agents for protecting the American people from a known drug dealer. Please listen, Mr. President, we are asking you to please help.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.