

It is very hard work being a Peace Corps volunteer. They deal with issues that most Americans never deal with. Just simple basic necessities such as of electricity and water and matters such as that, they do without, or they are difficult to find in the remote areas where they are because they are helping other people that don't have those things we have in the United States. Generally, they work alone when they are in foreign countries.

But all is not well with the Peace Corps, Mr. Speaker, because during the time since President Kennedy started the Peace Corps and those wonderful people go overseas, many times those volunteers, those young Americans, become victims of crime in these foreign countries; and when they become victims of crime, in some cases our own country abandons them.

Between 2000 and 2009, the Peace Corps itself says there were over 221 rapes and attempted rapes, almost 150 major sexual attacks and 700 other sexual assaults. That is 1,000 crimes against American Peace Corps volunteers. Recently, the Peace Corps has announced that there is an average of 22 rapes a year against American Peace Corps volunteers somewhere in another country.

This is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about real people. They are real stories and they are real victims.

I would like to mention just one of those persons that I know personally. I have got to know Jess Smochek since this crime against her has occurred. She joined the Peace Corps in 2004. On her first day as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bangladesh, a group of men started sexually groping her as she was walking to the house that she was to live in. But no one in the Peace Corps did anything about this assault. She told the Peace Corps staff over and over again that she felt unsafe in Bangladesh and the situation she was in, but the Peace Corps didn't do anything.

Months later, she came in contact with the same men, who then kidnapped her. They beat her. They sexually assaulted her. But they weren't through. They abandoned her and threw her in an alley somewhere in Bangladesh. And no one did anything.

According to Jess, the Peace Corps did everything they could to cover this up because they seemed to be more worried about America's relationship with Bangladesh than they were about this American volunteer that was assaulted, a victim of crime. Jess says that the Peace Corps not only didn't do anything, they blamed her for the conduct of others. They blamed her for being a sexual assault victim.

Mr. Speaker, a rape victim is never to be blamed for the crime that is committed against her. It is the fault of the criminal offender, whether it occurs in the United States or abroad. We need to understand that these precious people who go overseas and represent

us somewhere in the world, when a crime is committed against them, we need to take their side. We need to be supportive of those individuals. And we don't assume they did anything wrong, because they did not do anything wrong when they became a victim of crime. They were just victims of crime, and the person that should be held accountable is the criminal, and not to blame the victim.

Mr. Speaker, rape is never the fault of the victim. It is always the fault of the perpetrator.

But Jess got no satisfaction from the Peace Corps. No one did anything. When she got home, she was told to tell other people that she was coming back to the United States for medical reasons, to have her wisdom teeth pulled, not for the sexual assault that was committed against her.

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This was Jess's case. A few others were brought to light recently by ABC News and 20/20. And now, more and more of these Peace Corps volunteers over the years are coming forward and telling us about their stories. Mainly, they are women. We recently had a hearing in Foreign Affairs about this situation. Their stories were heart-wrenching. So now it's time to pass legislation to protect these women and to give them basic victim services, and that is what we will be doing in the next few days, along with the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, people cry, Peace, peace, but there can be no peace for American angels abroad until they are treated with the dignity that they deserve and the support of the United States. We need to help the Peace Corps readjust itself to become a better institution.

And that's just the way it is.

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, like many Americans, I was profoundly disappointed in President Obama's announcement last night. I had hoped that he would offer an Afghanistan troop drawdown that was significant, swift, and sizable. Sadly, the proposal failed on all three counts. Now is the time for bold action and decision-making to bring our Nation's Afghanistan policy in line with what the American people want, while recognizing the deep and grave toll this war has taken on our global credibility and our national security. Instead, the administration's choice was to largely stay the course. Instead, President Obama chose to perpetuate a war that is not only bankrupting us morally but fiscally as well. The loss of blood and treasure cannot be underestimated.

The American people have been enormously patient, Mr. Speaker. They

have endured great sacrifice. But after nearly a decade of war, they're weary of losing their bravest men and women and their hard-earned tax dollars to a policy that simply has not achieved its goals.

We are not more secure. The Afghanistan leadership wants us out and their people do not appreciate our sacrifice. This is not a partisan issue. When asked, the majority of Americans want our troops to come home. And not several years into the future. No, they want our troops to come home now.

Abandoning this military policy does not mean that we will abandon the people of Afghanistan. A smart security plan would provide for development and reconciliation. It would bring the international community together and help the Afghan people move towards a sustainable future through economic and domestic support, among other means.

Mr. Speaker, more than 1,600 lives have been lost. Where will it end? When will our sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, friends and people we know in the community come home from Afghanistan? How many empty chairs are there at the dinner table tonight? When will the heartbreak end?

Let's talk about the economic cost. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle like to talk about dollars and cents, about how this and other actions we take are costing us too much money. Well, while we stand here, money is flying out of our Treasury to support this war. Try \$10 billion a month. Imagine what we could do with \$10 billion a month. Just last week, this House voted to take food from the mouths of pregnant women and their children. We're supposed to pinch pennies on important investments like our children and other American projects while we waste huge sums on a failed war. This boggles the mind and it shortchanges the needs we have right here at home.

It is long past time, Mr. Speaker, that we put an end to this madness. It is time to bring our troops home—all of our troops—safely home.

VICTORY IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KINZINGER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. There's something that I'll personally never forget. That occurred in April, 2007. I'll get to why that is something I'll never forget in a second. That's when the majority leader, Senator HARRY REID, said of Iraq, "I believe myself that the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and—you have to make your own decisions as to what the President knows—know this war is lost and that the surge is not accomplishing anything, as indicated by the extreme violence in Iraq."

As in 2007, Senate Majority Leader REID was in a rush to the exits in Iraq and a rush to declare the war had been