

AMERICA'S FOREIGN POLICY WITH REGARD TO AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) for exchanging his time with me. He will be speaking right after I am done, but I have a pressing appointment dealing with the very issue on which I am speaking, which really made it imperative that I speak at this time. I thank the gentleman from Maryland for the consideration that he has given me on this one.

Mr. Speaker, it has been 1 month and 1 week since 6,000 Americans were slaughtered in New York and the Pentagon. Needless to say, our lives will never be the same. So much has happened, and at this moment so much is happening, that at times it is as confusing as it is awesome.

But amid this chaos and runaway emotions, our President, George W. Bush, has proven a steady hand, and has refused to go off half-cocked. He has been courageous and decisive. He has acted with deliberation, and has been methodical in his approach.

I was so proud that our President decided that a major humanitarian commitment be made as part of our battle plan in Afghanistan and against the terrorists in Afghanistan. With thousands of our own people being slaughtered, we could have just struck out blindly, but we are not doing that.

A tremendous effort has been made in this volatile environment to protect the rights and safety of our own Muslim Americans, and we are reaching out to Muslim countries and their people.

In Afghanistan itself, we are in fact limiting our retaliation to bin Laden's terrorists and to the Taliban regime that gave him safe haven. Underscoring the noble motives that still direct our actions, President Bush recently drew our attention to the larger percentage of Afghan children who are orphans, and asked that the children of America make it a personal project to help these Afghan youngsters who have suffered so much. What other country would be so gracious?

President George W. Bush is not only our leader in this crisis, not only our Commander in Chief, but also a wonderful inspiration for us to live up to our ideals. America has not always been right, and certainly we have many black marks in our history, but we can be proud of our record because we have often tried to do our best; more often than not, tried to do what was right; and looked out, more than any other country that one can record, to do the

right thing and to respect the human rights of people everywhere, even those of our enemy.

We rebuilt the economies of our former enemies during World War II, and sent some of our young people, many of our young people, in fact, in the last century, to defeat the forces of tyranny wherever they were.

Let us remind the Muslim world, for example, that the last two places that America sent her young people to intervene, our young soldiers, were in Bosnia and Kosovo. In both cases we sent our Armed Forces around the world to a place that had nothing to do with our own security in order to save Muslim people who were being murdered by armed thugs; and those thugs, of course, claimed to be Christians.

We understand, of course, that Christians would not participate in the murderous and heinous crimes that were being committed against the Muslims in the Balkans.

Similarly, we would hope that the Muslims of the world will make it clear, as many have, that the ghoulis slaughter of innocent Americans was totally inconsistent with their religious convictions, with the teachings of Islam.

In terms of our country today, even though we have tried our best to help those around the world who are suffering, we have been the target of unprecedented hatred. Our open and free society is maligned and vilified with a staggering level of venom and vitriol.

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Perhaps to understand this, we need to go back a few decades to a far different time, during the Cold War. I worked in the White House during the years when Ronald Reagan brought the Cold War to an end, culminating with the dismantling of the Communist dictatorship that controlled Russia and its puppet States. Essential to a great victory was President Reagan's support for various people who were fighting to free themselves from Communist tyranny.

The bravest and most fierce of these anti-Soviet insurgents were in Afghanistan. There are a lot of Monday morning quarterbacks these days who would suggest now long after that war has been over and the Cold War has come to a successful conclusion that we should not have supported those freedom fighters whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere because freedom fighters, of course, these insurgents, were not perfect people and, in fact, did commit some crimes, and there is no doubt about it.

Those folks who are now complaining about that strategy which ended up saving the world from a nuclear holocaust and from a Cold War that went on and on, those folks who are complaining about it do not even have good 20/20 hindsight.

Clearly and unequivocally the American people can be proud that we provided the Afghan people the weapons they needed to win their own freedom and independence from the Soviet Union, which was occupying their country. That Cold War battle was a major factor in breaking the will of the Communist bosses in Moscow, thus ending the Cold War. This, however, is where we must begin if we are to understand the grotesque crime committed against the American people on September 11.

One of the common errors found in news reporting as of late has been the suggestion that those holding power in Afghanistan today are the same people who we supported in the war against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. The liberal press likes to suggest that we, meaning the American people, armed and trained those who have now come back to murder us on September 11. This by and large is wrong. It is factually in error.

Yes, there are some of those currently in power in Kabul who also fought the Russians, but by and large we are talking about two different groups of people. Those who fought the Soviet occupation were called the Mujahedin, and during my time at the White House, I had the opportunity to meet most, if not all, of the leaders of the Mujahedin who fought against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

There was seven major factions, and it is significant that the current Taliban leadership does not include any of these wartime leaders against the Soviet occupation, not one. After I left the White House and was elected to Congress, I had been working with these Mujahedin leaders, and I felt very strongly about their cause. So when I was elected to Congress, but before I got sworn into Congress, I had 2 months on my own between November and January. So I took that opportunity and I hiked into Afghanistan as part of a small Mujahedin unit and engaged in battle against Russian and Communist forces near and around the City of Jalalabad.

The muja I marched with were incredibly brave, but they were not senseless killers. They had religious faith, and certainly they were devout, but they were not fanatics. In fact, they prayed daily but I did not see them chastising the many Afghans who were with us who were not joining them in prayer. They faced death but their dreams were of life.

In fact, a boy, probably 16, 17 years old, an AK-47 strapped over his shoulder, ran up to me as we marched through the Afghan countryside. It was at night and the cannons were going off in the distance. I could see them light up the sky. I could hear the thunder of the cannons roaring. This young man came up to me, and in almost perfect English said, "They tell me you're in