

The strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq is two-pronged and not only a military endeavor. In addition to wrapping up our missions to capture and kill terrorists, we are also now placing a greater emphasis on preventing the recruitment of violent extremists by preventing these countries from returning to the conditions that fueled such hate in the past.

In fact, just a couple of hours ago, I participated in a video teleconference with the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team in the 3rd Infantry Division of the U.S. Army. The "sledgehammer brigade," as they are nicknamed, told me about over 120 projects they have completed or will soon be completed in a five-province region in Iraq. Their efforts are a big reason we have seen significant progress and stabilization in Iraq over the past 2 years.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue to support our forces in these two endeavors.

SAN JACINTO DAY

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today is April 21, and when I grew up in Texas April 21 was a holiday. We didn't go to school, and the reason I thought we didn't go to school was because April 21 is my mother's birthday and she always led me to believe that school was out because it was her birthday.

Later I learned that wasn't actually correct, that we had celebrated April 21 as a State holiday in Texas because it is one of the most, if not the most important day in Texas history. Because on April 21, 1836, 174 years ago, Texas gained complete independence from Mexico and became a free and independent nation for over 9 years.

A little history is due, I think. It all started when Mexico was a republic, a democracy, similar to the United States. Texas belonged to Mexico. But a person by the name of Santa Ana became President of Mexico. When he became President, he abolished the Mexican constitution and became dictator. And once he became dictator, he eliminated civil rights for everybody that lived in Mexico, including what is now Texas. So Texas sought independence, and on March 2, 1836, Texas declared independence from Mexico and cited the reasons, because of the dictator, the tyrant who had denied civil rights to all those living in Texas.

At the same time a group of 187 volunteers, of all races from all the States in the Union and many foreign countries, assembled at a beat-up old Spanish church in central Texas called the Alamo. That's right, 187 volunteers stood in defiance of Santa Ana's army, who invaded Texas. Several thousand

enemy soldiers came in. We all know the history, that after 13 days of fighting those battles, the Alamo fell and all the defenders were killed.

However, that battle allowed for General Sam Houston, who was commander of the Texas army, to build an army to fight back. As William Barrett Travis said at the Alamo, who was the commander, a 26-year-old individual from South Carolina, that victory will cost the enemy more dearly than defeat. And he was right. Because of the massive losses of Santa Ana's forces at the Alamo, he had to regroup. He started then chasing Sam Houston.

Sam Houston was moving east. He was headed toward the Sabine-Neches area, the Sabine-Neches River, which is next to the United States. We call that Louisiana. He had yet to fight a battle. Santa Ana's armies had been very successful in defeating the Texas armies in almost every battle. And Sam Houston had yet to fight, but he found himself, on April 21, 1836, between the Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto River in a marshy land called San Jacinto. There he stood to fight.

Most battles are fought in the morning after sunrise, but on April 21 the Texas army was so eager to fight that at 3 o'clock in the afternoon they decided to march on Santa Ana's forces, which outnumbered the Texans over two to one.

The Texas army was an odd-looking bunch. They were volunteers, but they were from, once again, all over the country. They were frontiersmen. They were shopkeepers. They were lawyers and doctors. They were made up of Texans and of Hispanic dissent. We call those Tejanos. They were led by Captain Juan Seguin, and his Tejanos were part of the calvary. So as not to be mistaken for the Mexican army, because the Texans had no uniforms, Juan Seguin's troops wore a playing card in their hat band to make sure that the Texans knew who they were.

So the Texans marched on Santa Ana's forces completely by surprise and defeated them, an overwhelming defeat, one of the biggest upsets in military history. Half of Santa Ana's forces were killed; the other half were captured. The battle lasted 18 minutes, and one-third of the land in the United States, which is now the United States, switched hands.

This is a map of the way Texas looked after April 21, 1836. Texas claimed all of the land, which is part of Texas, part of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and Kansas.

Texas became a free and independent nation that day, stayed a republic for 9 years, and then joined the United States. Texas only got into the United States by one vote when a Louisiana Senator finally changed his mind and allowed Texas to come into the United States.

I mention this, April 21, because it's an important day not only for Texas

but for all people who believe in freedom. That these freedom fighters, these volunteers in 1836, many of them gave their lives for that word "liberty." A word that we still fight for today. In our history a lot of people fought for that word and died for independence, both for Texas and for the United States.

So we honor those brave Texans on this April 21, the anniversary of San Jacinto Day.

And that's just the way it is.

HONORING ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Speaker, as the Nation's newest Member of Congress, it is truly an honor to have my first remarks on the floor be in commemoration of Israel's 62nd anniversary.

Today I proudly rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 260, which recognizes the independence of the Jewish state of Israel and reaffirms the unyielding friendship and unshakable alliance between our two great nations.

As Israelis and Jewish communities throughout the world celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, this resolution holds a special significance for me and my constituents in Florida's 19th District. I proudly represent a district with one of the Nation's largest number of Jewish Americans, as well as Holocaust survivors.

So many of my constituents remember when the promise of Israel was only an unlikely possibility, and over the years they watched the amazing realization of this dream and the establishment of this great nation.

For so many of my constituents and to so many Americans, that day in 1948 when Israel declared its independence was the day that a promise was fulfilled to the Jewish people who for so long struggled to find a place they could call home. Sixty-two years later, Israel has grown into a thriving democratic state with a technologically advanced economy and a rich, democratic culture.

The people of Israel embrace freedom, and through art and literature, music and business, the entire globe has benefited from Israel's existence and success. Throughout these 62 years,