

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

When the Philippines fell in April of 1942, more than 75,000 American and Filipino servicemen and countless civilians became prisoners of war. This number was decimated during the brutal Bataan Death March, which saw the death of over 16,000 POWs. Many soldiers survived the march, only to find themselves facing murderous treatment in prisoner-of-war camps scattered throughout the island.

When General MacArthur began his campaign to retake the Philippines in 1945, he made it a priority to liberate soldiers and civilians who were interned in these camps. This commitment was particularly important, since it was widely believed that captives would be killed by their retreating captors if measures were not undertaken to liberate them in advance of the main campaign.

General MacArthur's commitment to the civilian internees and prisoners of war on the island manifested itself in a particularly heroic way in the Allied raid on the prison camp at Los Banos. It was here that Filipino guerrilla forces and the men of the 511th parachute infantry regiment of the 11th Airborne division worked in concert to organize a multipronged assault with elements attacking from land, air and sea to liberate the prisoners of the camp.

The Allied forces took great risks to free their fellow soldiers and civilians who had fallen behind enemy lines. These truly heroic acts serve not only as examples of the humanitarian compassion of American servicemen and -women but also as an example of our Nation's longstanding commitment to leave no fellow soldier, living or dead, in enemy hands.

Mr. Speaker, as we have military personnel spread throughout the world today, many of whom are daily risking capture and torture at the hands of brutal terrorists, it is more important now than ever to recognize and honor the heroism and willing sacrifice of those soldiers who risked their own safety not to take a strategic objective, but simply to bring a comrade home.

Our soldiers, marines, airmen and sailors must be able to take a small measure of comfort that whatever happens to them in battle, that this Nation will always have the will and the resolve to find and repatriate all of those who were lost while on duty.

Mr. Speaker, evil has aggressively manifested itself in many forms throughout human history, and for the last 200 years, whether fighting totalitarian evil of monarchial, fascist or fanatical roots, American servicemen have made a habit of putting themselves squarely in evil's way. They have done so, secure in the knowledge that if they fall into the hands of the enemy, they will not be forgotten. Indeed, every effort possible will be undertaken to bring them home.

Mr. Speaker, this is the 60th anniversary of the liberation of over 2,000 prisoners from the camp at Los Banos, and

at a time when our military is deployed in harm's way around the globe, let us recognize those individuals who sacrificed to bring their brothers and sisters home, and let us honor the heroic actions of the past by officially reaffirming our Nation's commitment to leave no fighting man or woman in enemy hands at any time, now or in the future.