

Congressman Wally Herger (CA-02)

Memorial Day Speech (as prepared)

Sutter Cemetery District

May 31, 2010

Good morning. Thank you for the invitation to join you today. It's an honor to celebrate Memorial Day with all of you gathered here. I would like to thank the Sutter Cemetery District, our local veterans' groups and Blue Star Moms, the Honor Guard and General-Select McGillicuddy and all the men and women of Beale Air Force Base -- you make us all so proud. Finally, thank you to all of you today who have come to honor those who have given their lives on behalf of our nation.

From the time students in America open their first history textbook in elementary school, they learn that their freedoms were not given to us; they were fought for. We have achieved independence, ended the tragic institution of slavery, upended Hitler's pursuit of European dominance, confronted the evils of communism, and hunted brutal jihadists through the tireless work of U.S. service members who have fought to win and protect our cherished freedoms. Today, we honor those who've given their all to make the United States the world's only superpower and its brightest beacon of freedom. Among them, we pause to honor the sixteen brave men from Northern California who have fallen in Afghanistan and Iraq.

America remains a nation at war. In Afghanistan, the U.S. military is on the frontlines of the battle against the Taliban, the same group that harbored al Qaeda and allowed Bin Laden to plot the September 11 attacks. I believe success in this mission is critical to our national security because Afghanistan will either become a stable ally of the United States, or a sanctuary for terrorists. We must give our troops our full support and adequate time to implement President Obama's counterinsurgency strategy. I have full confidence in General Petraeus and General McCrystal as they implement this plan, and believe our troops in Afghanistan will achieve success in their mission just as their counterparts in Iraq have done.

There are other potential threats to our security. North Korea's recent hostile action against South Korea must not go ignored. While no one wants a military confrontation, Kim Jong Il should know that the U.S. military stands ready to protect the region from further aggression. Second, I'm deeply concerned about the substantial advancement in Iran's nuclear program over the past year. Iran is on the cusp of having enough enriched uranium for a bomb. This looming development threatens the existence of Israel and severely undermines U.S. security interests in the region.

So the mission of the American servicemember—defending our way of life and protecting our freedoms—remains as important as ever. We cannot adequately express our gratitude to those who defend our nation in uniform, and especially those who die to preserve our security and freedom. May God bless and protect them, and may He continue to bless our nation.