

I wish to thank my colleague from Michigan for joining me in cosponsoring this resolution, and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. *Leach*), for introducing the resolution with me.

This resolution commends the action of civilian employees of the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development and the members of the Armed Forces for their response to last December's tsunami tragedy in the Indian Ocean.

Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege to journey with a congressional delegation to the affected areas immediately in the aftermath of the disaster. As we viewed the stricken region, we were all impressed by the quality of the relief effort and the coordination between all parties. It was truly gratifying to see the governments, particularly of these four affected countries, stepping forward in some areas where we had simmering conflicts and military actions. People would put aside the hostilities to deal with those in need.

I must confess that the pictures of our military, the rapid response, spoke volumes. I had an opportunity to visit with the leadership, starting with Admiral Crowder, and other senior officers, down the chain of command, visiting with men and women on the front lines. It was clear that they were not just acting out of a professional dedication and a military ethic, but they were doing it for the profound and heartfelt desire to help people in need.

While the pictures spoke volumes of the affected people throughout that region, I think it is important that we also recognize the efforts of the civilians from the State Department and USAID who do the tireless work of diplomacy and development that form the backbone of our foreign policy. They contribute day in and day out with far less fanfare and too often less of our support.

I was struck by individual cases of Foreign Service officers. Two examples that had been brought to my attention while I was visiting was that of Richard Hanrahan and Michael Chadwick, who were junior consular officers from American embassies who were on vacation in Phuket when the disaster struck.

They were there with their own families and had to make sure they were safe, but then they acted to set up their own remote control command post in Phuket to ensure the safe return of Americans. They dealt with traumatized families under the most difficult of circumstances,

being able to borrow cell phones and deal with the communication difficulties; dealing with really very difficult situations, going from hospital to hospital, identifying injured Americans, and reporting on the situation before others had a chance to arrive.

Having seen and heard how these people behaved in such difficult circumstances, hour after hour, day after day, using their own independent action and individual motivation is something that all of us in Congress can be proud of. Having seen the impact that the officials from the State Department and USAID, working together with our military in response to the tsunami, highlights for us all the need to continue to enhance our diplomatic development and humanitarian capabilities.

As I heard these stories and met these people, I thought of the work that former Secretary of State Powell performed when he invested the prestige of his office, used the leverage of his position and his own experience to increase the support, ramping up the hiring of a new class of officials and making it a personal priority to make sure that the men and women in the front lines of the State Department around the world had the resources that they needed.

I hope that our new Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, will build upon his actions and as we in this Congress go through our appropriations cycle, we support her and our diplomats with the necessary funding.

We should strengthen the ability of the State Department to respond to these crises, both natural and man-made, in part to minimize the challenge for our over-stretched military who are not always going to be able to be available in force to make the contributions that we saw in the aftermath of the tsunami. Often, frankly, there are tasks better left to civilian hands.

This disaster was an illustration of the value of the services provided by many of these agencies. I think of the USAID's outstanding individuals who were there as part of the briefing, indicating how they were equipped and ready to go to help fight the problems after the tsunami, and deal with the aftermath of poverty and environmental degradation. Hopefully, their work will make these communities less vulnerable in the future, and we can invest in disaster mitigation and planning to reduce the loss of life the next time the inevitable disaster strikes.

It is the selfless commitment of these individuals in the military, the State Department, and USAID that is making a difference. At a time when our prestige, particularly in this region, as a Nation is at an all-time low, according to independent opinion surveys, the contributions in the aftermath of the tsunami is making a difference, particularly with Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country. Two-thirds of the Indonesians are now more favorable to the United States because of what they saw, Americans responding and dealing with the aftermath of this disaster.

We should continue to invest in diplomacy and development along with our national defense, extend the kindness and compassion demonstrated by American people into a full-time commitment to those who suffer around the world. These efforts will pay dividends not just for the people in need but for our security as well.

The civilian employees of the State Department, the USAID, and our men and women in uniform went beyond the call of duty in responding to the tsunami. Through this demonstration of their professionalism, skill, creativity and commitment, they saved lives and took important steps for peace and security. I strongly urge the adoption of this resolution.