

Written Testimony from Scott C. Stump

H.R. 503 (Roe), the "*National Desert Storm and Desert Shield War Memorial Act*"

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Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation

1334 Longworth House Office Building

February 26th 2014

February 25th 1991, exactly 23 years ago yesterday, was the 30th Anniversary of Independence for the state of Kuwait. Instead of celebrating to mark the occasion, dramatic and tragic events were unfolding which would reshape and change the future of not just Kuwait, but the entire world!! On that day in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia a SCUD missile fired by Iraqi forces slammed into a makeshift barracks housing U.S. Army Troops, killing 28 soldiers 15 of them women and wounding 100. Exactly 23 years ago today February 26th 1991 the Tank Battle of 73 Easting was raging, in which U.S. and British troops destroyed 160 Iraqi tanks. At the same time, retreating Iraqi troops set fire to 737 Kuwaiti oil wells which sent forth thick, acrid, black smoke, across Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. Finally on February 28th 1991, Kuwaiti troops raised the emirate's flag in Kuwait City and President Bush 41, declared a suspension of offensive combat.

I mention these historic events to put things into perspective regarding Operation Desert Storm or as many have come to call it, the "100 Hour War". You see the blessing and the curse of Operation Desert Storm was that it's rapid and overwhelming success has made it's recollection no more than a fuzzy distant memory for most. A blip on the radar screen of history. The majority of American children born after 1991 have no idea what Desert Shield & Desert Storm was, or what it accomplished!! If you all can think back to January & February of 1991 things were VERY perilous and uncertain. The constant threat of biological and chemical warfare

was on everyone's mind and gas masks and MOPP Suits became the uniform of the day. We also led a coalition of 34 nations from across the globe, including Egypt and Syria, which was the largest coalition since WWII. That type of teamwork is something we will probably NEVER see again in our lifetimes. The ultimate sign of uncertainty were the tens of thousands of body bags which were at the ready in the event of mass casualties. By the grace of God, all of the careful planning came together, our troops performed admirably, and we accomplished our mission of liberating Kuwait much quicker and with far fewer casualties than anyone expected.

So, why should there be a Desert Shield & Desert Storm Memorial? There are many reasons, however, for the sake of brevity I'll focus on three.

- 1) First of all, Desert Storm was a large-scale war. There were close to 600,000 American service members who deployed to Southwest Asia which represented 73% of the total number of troops in theatre. The Marine Corps alone deployed over 92,000 Marines which was their largest deployment since Vietnam. The biggest tank battles since World War II occurred in Desert Storm, and the coalition flew over 100,000 air sorties and dropped 88,500 tons of bombs. However of highest importance is making sure that we honor the 600,000 Americans who served and make sure that the almost 300 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice are NEVER EVER Forgotten!!!
- 2) Secondly, we liberated Kuwait, a peaceful country that was invaded and whose citizens were held captive for close to 7 months and endured much suffering and unmentionable atrocities at the hands of the Iraqi aggressors. Liberating Kuwait and shielding Saudi Arabia from invasion sent a powerful message not just to Saddam, but to the world. That message was that we still believe in fighting for what's right, and for upholding our values, ideals, and principles. NO MATTER WHAT THE RISK OR POSSIBLE COST!! If you ever wonder whether

liberating Kuwait was important or made a lasting difference, just ask any Kuwaiti, young or old. Even those who are too young to remember or born long after 1991 will tell you, just as they have told me, "If it weren't for the U.S. we'd be Iraqis now." It IS a big deal and we have effected the ongoing history of Kuwait into eternity.

- 3) Lastly, but of NO less importance. During Operation Desert Storm we liberated Kuwait, but at the same time we also liberated the United States of America! Desert Storm Occurred around 15 years after the fall of Saigon. Our country carried around a lot of collective guilt and shame for the way many of our Vietnam Veterans were treated upon returning home . I served with some of those veterans and I heard the stories they told, like walking through an airport here in the U.S. after graduating Boot Camp and being spit on. Just for having the AUDACITY of serving their country and wearing their uniform PROUDLY. Desert Storm was a MAJOR turning point in our country and it allowed those raw and open wounds left over from Vietnam to finally heal. America FINALLY felt good about itself again, and our men and women in uniform were supported and admired for their sacrifice and their service. On our flight home from Saudi Arabia, we were told by our commanding officer that we would be marching in a welcome home parade. We DIDN'T want a parade. We were reluctant participants since we felt that we had just done our job. I remember riding in the bus to the beginning of the parade route when a gentleman stepped in front of the bus and flagged us down. He climbed aboard and identified himself as a Vietnam Veteran. He asked if it would be alright if he rode with us because he never had a parade when he came home and he wanted to see what it felt like. During the parade as we marched in formation we received a heroes welcome. The streets were overflowing, flags were everywhere, and people were cheering, some even crying. We stopped in front of a podium where our C.O. delivered his remarks, none of which I have ANY recollection of. EXCEPT at the very end when he

dedicated "OUR" parade to the Vietnam Veterans who NEVER had one. At that point, I knew that Desert Storm touched Americans in many different ways. I firmly believe that if it was not for Desert Storm and the change of attitude toward our military it brought about, our men and women in uniform who are currently serving and who have served in Afghanistan, and Iraq, would not be treated with the dignity and respect that they absolutely deserve.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, the importance of a war should NEVER be judged or based solely upon it's number of casualties or it's duration. If the cause was just, noble in purpose, and lasting in effect, then that war deserves to be memorialized. Operation Desert Shield & Storm fits all of those criteria. Ladies and Gentlemen of the Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Sub-Committee I am asking each of you on behalf of the over 600,000 Desert Shield & Desert Storm Veterans, their family members, and the 33 other coalition countries, to send HR503 out of committee, and to vote YES on the house floor so that Desert Shield & Storm's legacy and importance will not become a mere footnote in our nation's history, but rather be ensured a lasting place of honor. Thank You.