

Derrick Van Orden: My commitment to Israel in the midst of congressional chaos

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I served our country for over 26 years, mostly as a Navy SEAL. During that time, I spent a full 16 years away from my family either training for combat, training others for combat, or in combat. I volunteered for all of my deployments and training assignments, knowing that they would separate me from my family but understanding that they would make me a better warrior so that I could protect my country and my family more effectively. Consequently, I lived and worked on five different continents during my time of service.

Although I missed my family desperately during those years, I knew I was working with a team that shared a common goal – keeping our nation safe and secure. I was under the assumption that as a member of Congress, all of my colleagues would be operating under the same principle. I was incorrect.

Last year was possibly the worst year in our family's history. We buried our first child who died this past August. She left us with three beautiful grandchildren and an honorable son-in-law. I missed the majority of her last year on earth because I chose to work in Congress to help fix the House and make sure that the country her children will grow up in without her would be worthy of her life.

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Out of the most horrific circumstances a parent can ever live through, our dearest Sydney gave me a gift. It is the understanding of the importance of time. It is the

one thing that we can give to others that we can never get back. This is why I need to be in Israel today.

When the entirety of the minority party can team with a minority of the majority party to remove a Speaker of the House, it is clear that Congress has become a dysfunctional body that is incapable of putting aside personal and political differences to work together for the American people.

This is what caused the current impasse to elect a Speaker of the House, and it is unacceptable on all levels. As a freshman member of Congress, I have cast seventeen votes for a Speaker in less than ten months. Fifteen for Kevin McCarthy, and two for Jim Jordan.

Currently, as I write this piece, there is no path for a new Speaker, and Congress remains rudderless and in disarray. There is no sense of urgency to elect a Speaker despite the many challenges we face at home, including an open southern border and skyrocketing gas and grocery prices. Our children's education is being threatened by political agendas and misplaced priorities antithetical to the American Dream.

Over seven million illegal immigrants entered the country in the last two years with over 150 of those apprehended being on the terrorist watch list. There are also the challenges our friends and allies are facing around the world. Most striking is the sudden and vicious attacks carried out by savages in Israel, where Jews are being slaughtered on a level that they have not been since the Holocaust and an unknown number of American citizens are being held hostage by those same savages.

After retiring from the military in 2014, I made a solemn promise to the Jewish people that if anything like what took place on October 7, 2023, were to ever happen, that I would help them and their nation to the best of my ability. I am keeping that promise.

The intent of my trip to Israel during this time of crisis is multifold. Primarily, I am there to witness what has and is taking place so that I can speak from an informed position to categorically refute members of the Democratic party and others who are actively denying the horrific acts that have been, and continue to be, committed as you read this. I will be inspecting medical facilities to have a holistic understanding of the current and future needs of the Israeli people and speaking to military and other governmental officials to understand the needs of those entities

and how to best provide them as I do not trust the Biden administration to do so truthfully.

As a retired Navy SEAL and combat medic, I am uniquely qualified to objectively ascertain the ground truth and bring that information back to Congress where I can hopefully increase the sense of urgency for my colleagues of both parties to put aside their petty personal and significant political differences and act in the best interest of America and our beleaguered allies.

I would ask that God bless you and your families.

-Van Orden, R-Prairie du Chien, represents the 3rd Congressional District.