

ILARIO PANTANO'S MEMOIR -- (House of Representatives - June 26, 2006)

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Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I might speak at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from North Carolina is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on April 5, 2005, I rose on the House floor in defense of former Marine Lieutenant Ilario Pantano, who had been accused of premeditated murder for his actions in April 2004 that resulted in the deaths of two suspected Iraqi insurgents.

At that time I encouraged my colleagues to support a resolution calling on the United States Government to dismiss all charges against Lieutenant Pantano who had defended the cause of freedom, democracy and liberty, while serving as a platoon commander in Iraq.

In an action of self-defense, Lieutenant Pantano made a split-second battlefield decision to shoot two suspected Iraqi insurgents who refused to follow his orders to stop their movement towards him. Lieutenant Pantano did his duty as any marine officer should when faced with the enemy.

Following a 5-day military hearing in May 2005, the truth of Lieutenant Pantano's innocence prevailed, and he was cleared of all charges. Lieutenant Pantano left the Marine Corps following the dismissal of the charges brought against him, as the media frenzy surrounding his case may have put him or other corps members at greater risk were he to return to duty.

As an outstanding leader and dedicated servant to the Marine Corps and our Nation, I believe Lieutenant Pantano's resignation was a great loss for the Marine Corps and a great loss for America. Mr. Speaker, I recall these events to draw attention to the recent release of a memoir by Lieutenant Pantano, coauthored by Malcolm McConnell, entitled: ``Warlord, No Better Friend, No Worse Enemy."

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Ilario Pantano first enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of 17 and was inspired to reenlist following the terrorist attack of September 11 of 2001, 10 years after his service as an elite marine sniper and a veteran of Desert Storm.

Answering the patriotic call to duty, Lieutenant Pantano voluntarily left a successful career in finance to head to officer's training school in Quantico, Virginia. As a platoon commander in Iraq, Lieutenant Pantano was praised by his fellow marines and superiors as a capable and devoted leader and an intelligent and motivated officer who embodied the Marine Corps principles of honor, courage, and commitment.

As someone who had the pleasure of meeting Lieutenant Pantano, along with his lovely wife, Jill, and his two sons, I believe every American would benefit from reading the inspiring story of such a great American and a military hero.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that those who read Lieutenant Pantano's story will come to a better understanding of the depth of his strength and heroism, both on the battlefield and in the courtroom.

Mr. Speaker, I close by asking God to please bless the men and women in uniform and to ask God to continue to bless America.

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