

in ongoing assistance missions, and over the last twelve months Hoosier Guard soldiers and airmen have lent a helping hand in Haiti, Hungary, Kuwait, Slovakia, and South Korea. The extraordinary range of military service being performed by the men and women of the Indiana National Guard is strong testimony to the reliance that is placed on them.

We should never forget that while the Indiana National Guard is responsive to its Federal mission, it also stands ready to respond to the call of our Governor for service in support and protection of the citizens of Indiana. The Indiana Guard was also in the forefront of the special National Guard task force organized to help provide security for the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996.

The fighting men and women, the soldiers and airmen of today's Indiana National Guard, are worthy of those who, 80 years ago, proudly returned carrying the honors earned on European battlefields. As President Chirac reminds us by his public commendations, we should take time to remember and honor the soldiers of that era. Equally, we should pause as we approach the new millennium, to recognize today's successors to those "Hoosier Gunners" who served so bravely and honorably on the battlefields of France at the beginning of this century.

EXPOSING RACISM

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 24, 1999

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, in my continuing efforts to document and expose racism in America, I submit the following articles into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

[From the *Virginian-Pilot*]

CONFEDERATE GROUP BATTLES FOR ITS FLAG

(By Linda McNatt)

In May 1997, two members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans confronted Ku Klux Klansmen in front of the Pensacola, Fla., judicial building.

Sworn to conduct themselves as Southern gentlemen, the SCV members asked the hooded Klansmen to put down what they believe is their Confederate battle flag.

"There were 20 of them, maybe," said Robert A. Young, who belongs to the Sons of Confederate Veterans. "This group of fellas came over from Louisiana. They were dressed up like ghosts. We didn't want the connection, and we told 'em so."

The peaceful confrontation made national news. The Klansmen didn't back down, but the SCV had made its point.

It wasn't the first time that the Sons of Confederate Veterans have defended the bright red flag with its blue cross and white stars.

And it's not likely to be the last. The flag, the SCV says, symbolizes the bravery of their ancestors who followed it through the smoke of battle.

But the same flag has been used by the Klan and other hate groups. For some African Americans, the Confederate flag represents terrorism, prejudice and hate.

That's why the Virginia General Assembly two weeks ago said "no flag" when it voted to allow the group, which has 6,000 Virginia members, to have a special state license plate.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans aren't happy. Members have said they might try to re-introduce the flag image. Bills have been changed before, they say, although they won't say how they plan to do it.

Or—if the Senate fails to consider anything but the blank plate with the name of the organization on it—the SCV may take the issue to court.

They're ready for a gentlemanly battle, they say. The Sons of Confederate Veterans was organized in 1896 as an offshoot of the United Confederate Veterans. Today, the mission of the group is to "preserve the history and the legacy" of the "citizen soldiers" who fought for the Confederacy in the War Between the States, from 1861 to 1865.

Proof of kinship to a Confederate soldier is required. The SCV allows blacks to join; in fact, they say, race has never been a question on their membership application. And they do claim black members, although no one at the national headquarters—an antebellum mansion in Columbia, Tenn.—can say how many of their 27,000 members worldwide are black.

Neither can Patrick J. Griffin III, SCV national commander and chief, of Darnestown, Md.

"We do not have a block on our application that asks for race," Griffin said. "I've never seen anything in this organization that questions race or religion. You either have an honorable Confederate ancestor or you don't."

The SCV, with 700 camps in 36 states, Europe and South America, accepts members as young as 12.

"We're trying to preserve an accurate view of Southern American history, to make sure the names of our ancestors are not sullied," Griffin said.

The group dedicates itself to preservation, to marking confederate soldiers' graves, to historical re-enactments. It holds regular meetings to discuss the military and political history of the Civil War. It publishes a bimonthly magazine, and it hands out two scholarships and a medical research grant each year.

Executive director Maitland Westbrook III said that the SCV is not "statistically oriented," so he can't say how many African Americans have benefited from SCV scholarships.

The organization has five full-time employees at national headquarters. None of them, currently, are black, Westbrook said, although the SCV has employed blacks in the past.

The SCV also spends a lot of time defending its heritage—including its symbol—the Confederate battle flag.

Collin Pulley Jr. of Courtland is national chief of heritage defense. In the last several months, he's complained about "anti-Southern" TV shows and objected to a rap CD that depicts a burning Confederate flag on its cover.

Since Wal-Mart quit carrying the flags after some customers complained, he's led a SCV campaign—unsuccessful so far—to persuade the discount chain to re-stock small Confederate flags his group uses on graves.

"It has been our position for the last two years not to carry the Confederate flag because, here at Wal-Mart, we do not stand for what that flag represents," said Marvin Deshommes, a buyer at the Bentonville, Ark., headquarters.

What the flag represents, the SVC says, is heritage, not hate. And the group is determined to reclaim its glory.

It succeeded in Maryland and, more recently, in North Carolina. Both states, and several others, allow SCV members to display the flag on license plates.

A federal judge ruled in Maryland in February 1997 that "The Confederate battle flag on special Maryland license plates is protected by the First Amendment and cannot be banned."

The SCV got a similar ruling in North Carolina last December. There, the protest was less about the flag and more about whether the organization was actually a "civic group." The SCV took it to court and won.

In Virginia, said Brag Bowling of Richmond, legislative liaison for the SCV, "We're exploring all options. We're deeply disappointed they took the flag off the license plate. We got nailed in the House. We want to see how it goes in the Senate."

It was likely the impassioned plea of Del. Jerrauld C. Jones, D-Norfolk, that swayed the House. Jones said the flag, often connected with hate and terrorism by many African Americans, had reminded him throughout his life of fear, anger and claims of racial supremacy.

The special license plate legislation passed, but without the flag. SCV members vow they have never used the flag for such purposes as Jones claimed.

But the flag is sometimes used as a symbol of "oppression, violence and brutality," said Janis V. Sanchez, professor of psychology at Old Dominion University.

"The argument is that the flag was appropriated by the KKK," Sanchez said. "But that doesn't change the fact that it is associated with the Klan and with slavery. The Civil War was about slavery, and that's what the Confederate flag stands for. It has been used by many people to send a signal to African Americans."

"I know the Sons of Confederate Veterans are saying that it represents their heritage, but they cannot separate the meanings."

The SCV claims that the Civil War wasn't about slavery; rather, it was about states' rights. More than 95 percent of the soldiers who fought for the South weren't even slave owners, they maintain.

More like 85 percent, said Dr. Harold D. Wilson, an ODU history professor.

At the time of the Civil War, there were 9 million people in the Southern states, Wilson said; 4 million of those were slaves. Of the remaining 5 million, 330,000—mostly white males—were slave owners. Wilson said he believes about 85 percent of the soldiers didn't own slaves.

Some blacks, he pointed out, did serve with the South. "In the North, blacks participated fully in the war; in the South, they were mostly servants or laborers," Wilson said. "There were great debates over whether blacks should fight for the Confederacy, and they were conducted mostly in a very private, sensitive manner."

What caused the Civil War? "In the upper Southern states, it probably was states' rights," Wilson said. "In the lower South, with its large plantations, it was more about slavery."

"What in the world does the battle flag represent? It was the military flag of the Confederacy. It represented the might of the Confederate government. To that part of the Confederacy where there were few slave owners, it may have represented something entirely different."

And that part of the Confederacy may well represent Virginia, Wilson admitted. The Confederate battle flag was first used by the Army of Northern Virginia, where there were few large slave owners compared to the deep South.

Should the Sons of Confederate Veterans be allowed to use the flag on its license plate?

The group has an ally it likely doesn't even know about. The Rev. Jeff Berry, national imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, said he believes it is their right.

Like the SCV, the Klan uses the flag to represent "heritage, not hate," said Berry, whose group was started by Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Unlike the SCV, non-whites are not allowed in the Klan. The two groups have no connection, Berry said. But the Klan, which says it believes first in the U.S. Constitution, says the SCV ought to be able to display the Confederate flag.

"If it isn't OK to fly the Confederate flag in the U.S., why is it OK for blacks to fly the African flag?" Berry said. "We would defend the right of the SCV to fly its flag. Nobody should be able to take that right away."

CHRISTIAN VILLAGE BURNED BY HINDUS—WAVE OF SECULAR VIOLENCE GOES BACK TO CHRISTMAS DAY

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 24, 1999

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I was very distressed to see an article in the March 19 issue of the New York Times reporting that in the village of Ranaloi in India, a mob chanting "Victory to Lord Ram" burned down 157 of 250 homes of Christians. I thank my good friend Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh for calling my attention to this atrocity, which unfortunately is not an isolated incident but part of a wave of anti-Christian violence that began on Christmas Day.

Since Christmas, several Christian churches, prayer halls, and religious missions were destroyed by Hindu extremists affiliated with the Bajrang Dal, a part of the VHP, a militant Hindu organization that belongs to the same family of organizations as the ruling BJP. The VHP also praised the Hindus who raped four nuns, calling them "patriotic youth" and denouncing the nuns as "antinational elements." In January a missionary and his two very young sons were burned to death in their jeep by a gang of Hindus chanting "Victory to Hannuman," then another nun was raped. In early February the bodies of two more Christians have been found in the state of Orissa. At least four priests have been murdered. In 1997, police broke up a Christian religious festival with gunfire. A country that engages in such practices should be declared a religious oppressor and perhaps a terrorist state.

This latest incident took place during the period of Lent, leading up to Easter. With Easter coming in April, followed soon after by the 300th anniversary of the Sikh Nation, we may now have the best opportunity to raise the consciousness of the world to the religious tyranny that exists just under the veneer of Indian democracy.

Although India has democratic elections, for Christians, Sikhs, Muslims, Dalits, and so many others, there is no democracy. No matter who they elect, the result is more killing and more oppression. Is this true democracy? As I have said before, this is not democracy, it is merely the opportunity to choose one's oppressors.

The only solution is freedom for all the people of South Asia. As the world's only superpower and the beacon of freedom for the world, the United States must do whatever it can to extend the blessings of liberty to all

people living under tyrannical, intolerant leaders, even if they claim to be democratic. We should stop funding this repressive government with American aid, impose economic sanctions as we did against the apartheid regime in South Africa, and go on record urging India to allow a plebiscite—a free, democratic vote—in Punjab, Khalistan, in Kashmir, in Christian Nagaland, and throughout their polyglot state to decide the future political status of these regions. This is the only way to end the genocide, settle the differences, and finally bring lasting peace to this troubled tinderbox known as South Asia.

Freedom is not only America's founding principle, it is our mission. Let us carry that mission to the deserving peoples and nations of the subcontinent. We look forward to the day when the glow of freedom shines on all the people of South Asia and the world.

[From The New York Times, Mar. 19, 1999]

157 HOMES BURNED IN RELIGIOUS CLASH IN INDIA

(By Celia W. Dugger)

BHUBANESWAR, INDIA, MARCH 18.—Less than two months after a Hindu mob killed a Christian missionary from Australia and his two young sons here in the eastern state of Orissa, Hindus and Christians clashed in a village this week, and 157 of the 250 Christian homes were burned down, state officials say.

The officials said they presumed that Hindus set the fires on Tuesday, but have no solid evidence. Christian villagers interviewed by television reporters blamed Hindus, who they said shouted "Victory to Lord Ram," a Hindu god, as they set the fires. Thirteen people were wounded, three by gunfire, and the police have arrested more than 40 people, officials said.

The tensions in the village—Ranaloi, in southern Orissa—developed after someone painted a trident, symbol of the Hindu god Shiva, over a Christian cross on a boulder about a mile outside the village.

The violence is part of a growing number of attacks on Christians in India in the last year. Church officials and opposition political parties say the problem has worsened since the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party became the head of a national coalition Government a year ago. Party leaders say they oppose the violence.

It is not clear who was responsible for the violence in Orissa, which is governed by the Congress Party. The state's Chief Minister, J.B. Patnaik, resigned after the killing of the missionary, Graham Staines, and his sons, Timothy, 10, and Philip, 6.

D.P. Wadhwa, the Indian Supreme Court Justice who was named by the Government to head an inquiry into the Staines killings, harshly criticized the central Government for failing to provide resources to investigate. The commission of inquiry, which was set up six weeks ago, is due to issue its findings in two weeks but has yet to field a team of independent investigators or to be given functional offices to work from.

The state police blamed a mob that they said was led by a man from the Bajrang Dal, a Hindu nationalist youth group that belongs to the same family of Hindu nationalist organizations as the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Leaders of the Bajrang Dal denied involvement, and said the violence was a backlash against what they called the Christians' deceitful efforts to convert impoverished, illiterate Indians.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 1214—DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VETERANS' CLAIMS ADJUDICATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 24, 1999

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, for years our Nation's veterans who submitted a claim to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for benefits associated with their military service, particularly service-connected disability compensation, have been forced to contend with a VA claims adjudication process which has been both too slow and too inaccurate. Too often the adjudication of a veterans' claim has taken not days, not weeks, not months, but years.

Recent information suggests that after waiting years for a decision, one out of three veterans may find that the decision made by VA was wrong. Untimely and inaccurate decision-making by the VA, and particularly the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), have been twin problems which have plagued veterans, veterans service organizations and Members of Congress who have sought to assist their veterans constituents.

While experience clearly indicated otherwise, VBA consistently reported that the quality of its work was nearly error free as measured by VBA. Between 1993 and 1997, VA was reporting an accuracy rate of 97%. This was unfortunately like the fox not only guarding the hen house, but also keeping the inventory of hens.

To his credit, the Under Secretary of Veterans Benefits, Mr. Joe Thompson instituted, on a trial basis, a new system for measuring the quality of the claims adjudication work performed by VBA. This new quality measure, the Strategic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) was tested and used operationally in 1998.

STAR use has been focused on claims submitted by veterans which require the VA to rate the claim, make a determination as to whether a medical disability is service-connected or non-service-connected and determine the degree of disability manifest. Using the STAR methodology, the accuracy of various actions taken during the adjudication process are used to determine if the case was correctly or incorrectly decided. A case is either all right or all wrong. Using STAR, the accuracy rate was 64%—less than two out of three claims were correctly decided.

While STAR has provided a more realistic assessment of the quality of VA claims adjudication, STAR does not currently meet generally accepted governmental standards for independence and separation of duties. Reviews of regional office decisions are made by persons who are also decision makers. There is not sufficient staff provided for reviewing enough cases to make statistically valid accuracy determinations at the regional office level. In order to pinpoint errors, it is important to be able to identify regional offices which have specific high or low accuracy rates and to ascertain the reasons for discrepancies between regional offices.

In addition to the problems documented by the STAR report, VBA is facing the impending