

PARAGUAY: A TERRORIST'S UTOPIA

The coming months should bring an increased focus on Paraguay. In reaction to the growing U.S. presence in Colombia and other South American nations, drug traffickers as well as various militant movements are gradually fanning out, establishing what is an alarming presence, according to U.S. officials. Unstable institutions, rampant corruption and a struggling economy make Paraguay an attractive venue for would-be terrorists and drug smugglers to establish their operations.

U.S. agencies have been monitoring clandestine activity in Paraguay for a number of years. However, only recently have they begun to increase their physical presence. According to reports, the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) has more than doubled the size of its office in Asuncion. In the wake of the terrorist strikes in the U.S. Paraguay's recent history of severing as a staging ground for militant Islamic groups such as Hezbollah and the Islamic Jihad will certainly draw closer scrutiny.

Terrorist Cells

The U.S. as well as the Southern Cone countries have long known about the involvement of radical Islamic terrorist organizations in the tri-border region, where Paraguay borders Argentina and Brazil. Now, as the result of increased U.S. pressure, Paraguayan authorities, and to a lesser extent, the governments of Brazil and Argentina, are beginning to take a more active role in monitoring these groups. In response to the terrorist attacks on September 11, Brazil and Argentina bowed to FBI requests to tighten its borders with their neighbors. Paraguay, worried over its reputation as a country harboring terrorists, has announced that it would temporarily would severely restrict issuing visas and increase security along its borders, particularly focusing on the eastern portion of the country, an area with a large Arab community. On September 21, foreign affairs ministers from the OAS nations met to discuss terrorism-related hemispheric security concerns. Portions of the talks dealt with the Southern Cone countries' long-standing belief that Paraguay has shown little concern in addressing the terrorist elements operating within its borders. For instance, Argentina has maintained that Hezbollah terrorists used Ciudad del Este, Paraguay's principle city in the tri-border area, as headquarters for their attacks on the Israeli Embassy in 1992 and a Buenos Aires' Argentine-Israeli Community Center in 1994. A trial involving 20 low-level defendants accused of assisting the attackers recently began, with some hoping that more knowledge will be revealed concerning who supervised the terrorists. Argentine pressure is mounting, with Enrique Mathov, its new Internet Security Secretary, calling the "triple border" area a "hot zone." Indeed, it is possible that the U.S. will step up pressure on the tri-border countries to clean up this area and eliminate "rouge elements."

U.S. Involvement

President Bush's call to sustain the war "until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated" indicates that U.S. authorities will certainly increase this country's monitoring of developments in the area. Triple-frontier countries have indicated that they intend to fully cooperate in helping the U.S. eliminate any terrorist threat in the region. Although Brazil and Argentina have increased their border security, Paraguay has perhaps taken the strongest position in support of the U.S. anti-terrorism efforts by asking the OAS to firmly support any U.S.-led retaliation.

Nevertheless, rhetoric and a strong anti-terrorism stance by these nations are not

deemed sufficient by U.S. authorities to quell their fears about the potential terrorist threat in the region. Paraguay's foreign minister, Jose Antonio Moreno, stated that 40 FBI agents have arrived in Paraguay and were headed to Ciudad del Este, "transit point for shadowy groups." Many experts foresaw this increased U.S. presence as inevitable; however, a deployment of this magnitude was certainly accelerated by the recent terrorist attack. The inevitability of U.S. involvement in the area was reflected in statements made by the State Department and former director of the FBI, Louis J. Freeh. The FBI's concern is rooted in a trip that Freeh took to South America in 1998 to assess security concerns. At the time, Freeh called for a multinational crackdown on crime, something he saw as an important step to establishing a hemispheric police alliance. He called the tri-border region "a free zone for significant criminal activity, including people who are organized to commit acts of terrorism." Last April, the State Department warned that the governments of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina are not capable of preventing Islamic terrorist originating from Paraguay's hub of militancy, Ciudad del Este.

A primary Washington concern has been the lack of control of the region's numerous airstrips and waterways. Using these modes of transportation, terrorist groups can communicate and move operatives and supplies with near anonymity. To reassert proper governmental control, the U.S. is offering its Special Forces to train and advise the Paraguayan military and national police on a variety of anti-terrorism and anti-drug tactics. U.S. Special Forces already have made their presence felt in Paraguay earlier this year by participating with the country's military on a "training exercise" focused on combating drug traffickers. Many thought that the "training exercise" closely resembled a counter-insurgency operation. This could signal a change in U.S. military policy in Paraguay, as further training could focus on counter-intelligence operations and counter-terrorism tactics. If the war on terrorism lasts for years, as the Bush administration has stated it will, the U.S. could soon find itself involved in a series of protracted and complicated campaigns in that nation.

HONORING RON WALTERS

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in order to honor a man in the City of Petaluma, where I proudly reside, who embodies the spirit and best qualities of that town. He is a man who attracts people through his gift of music and humor, and has used his special voice to make Petaluma a better place to live. Petalumans would know that I'm talking about Ron Walters.

Ron Walters' was born in Ute, Iowa on Thanksgiving Day in 1932 and from the beginning people have been thankful for his giving nature. Growing up in the depression, Ron migrated to California in 1936 with his parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles in car hauling a homemade house trailer filled with all their worldly possessions. After graduating from high school in Healdsburg he attended several colleges where he excelled in sports, music and drama. Ron graduated from Gonzaga University in Washington state where he starred

in varsity basketball and also set records as the sole representative of the University's unofficial track team.

After graduation, Ron returned to California where he held several jobs and met and married Judy Paige and soon was the father of three lovely daughters, Leigh, Juli and Erin. Then in October 1963 Ron, who was looking for a way to apply his love of music, walked into the KTOB radio station in Petaluma and asked for a job, which he thought he didn't get. But the next day, the station owner called to ask, "How come you're not a work?" Ron started work the same day.

At KTOB, Ron quickly became the "Voice of Petaluma," with a regular morning program. He quickly put his humor and homespun sensibilities to use. He used his microphone to raise money for efforts including Pop Warner Football, the Petaluma Boys Club (which was in dire financial straits), medical costs for an injured high school football player and many, many other worthy causes. He was a staunch supporter of Petaluma beautification projects and played an important role in Petaluma's historic preservation efforts which has preserved much of the city's Victorian architectural heritage, including his own home.

Ron not only played music on the radio, he also taught music at Sonoma State University and was a performer. He starred in local productions of Broadway musicals including acting and singing the role of the Professor Harold Hill in the "Music Man" three times, a very appropriate role for an Iowa boy who lived in a town nicknamed "River City." Ron also performed vocal jazz with the Harmonizers and Harmonettes and sang with various local bands including those of Ernie Walker, Peter Welker, Walt Oster and Bill Sax. Ron was a featured performer at Carnegie Hall last year with the jazz group, Take Note, and will sing there again next year.

Ron Walters' voice hasn't disappeared into the airwaves. The lessons he taught about civic involvement, philanthropy, and support for youth and the arts strongly reverberates in Petaluma and will do so for a long time to come.

Ron Walters always signed off his radio programs saying, "This is Ron Walters saying thanks a heap and don't forget what I told you yesterday."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to Ron on behalf of all the people his life has touched, "Thanks a heap, and no, we won't forget."

TRIBUTE TO THE STUDENTS OF
SOUTH FORK SCHOOL SYSTEM

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the students of South Fork School System in Kincaid, Illinois, and their important and heartwarming efforts to help those affected by terrorism.

On October 11, 2001, President Bush made a request of the children of America. He challenged each of them to earn and send in one dollar. This money, sent by the kindness of the children of the United States, will be used to reach out to the unfortunate children in far off Afghanistan.

The students of South Fork School heard and met that challenge. I recently received a check of \$533.00, made out to America's Fund for Afghan Children—that's more than one dollar for each student in South Fork, and more than our President requested.

The students, parents, faculty, and members of the Kincaid community should be recognized for this fine effort. The terrorists believed they could accomplish their goals with the murder of American innocents; but the American citizens have responded with aid to the innocents of Afghanistan. Nothing else could better show how utterly Al Qaeda has failed.

Mr. Speaker, as President Bush said in his announcement of the Fund for Afghan Children, "One of the truest weapons that we have against terrorism is to show the world the true strength of character of the American people." The children of South Fork have shown that character, and they deserve our thanks. May God bless them, and may God bless the United States of America.

HONORING ALBANIAN FLAG DAY

HON. DAVID E. BONIOR

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the Albanian American community in celebrating the 89th anniversary of Albanian Flag Day which symbolizes Albania's independence.

On November 28, 1912 Albanian declared its independence by raising its flag in the coastal town of Vlora. Since that glorious day, Albania has endured many hardships but has managed to persevere. The conflict that occurred in Kosova only a short time ago tested Albania and its people. Albania and its proud citizens are entering into a new era of political, social, and cultural growth. They possess a focused vision of their future and will do all they feel is necessary to ensure prosperity.

The United States relationship with Albania is strong and growing stronger. This was evident when Albania pledged its support to us in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Today, the United States is enriched by the many Albanian Americans living here. They have made major contributions to nearly every facet of American society. The Albanian community adds to the wonderfully diverse American culture by sharing with us their customs and beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, I join the people of Albania, those of Albanian ancestry around the world and Albanian Americans in celebrating Albanian Flag Day. I salute all of them for the tremendous contributions to freedom and human dignity which they have made.

HONORING DERAN KOLIGIAN AS AGRICULTURIST OF THE YEAR

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Deran Koligian on the occasion

of his recognition by the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce as the Agriculturist of the Year.

Mr. Koligian serves Fresno County's first district on the Board of Supervisors and was recently elected to serve as the Board's chairman for 2001. In addition to being a County Supervisor, he also serves on a myriad of commissions including the Economic Development Commission, Central Valley Project Authority Advisory Committee, Pleasant Valley Habitat Plan Board of Directors and Steering Committee, Southeast Regional Solid Waste Commission, and Water Resources Management Executive Committee.

Supervisor Koligian, born and raised in Fresno, is an ardent supporter of agriculture in the largest agricultural producing county in the nation. He has blended his dedication to agriculture and public service in a most beneficial and effective manner. Fresno County has been enriched by his commitment to agriculture and the community.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize Deran Koligian as the 2001 Agriculturist of the Year. I invite my colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Koligian and wishing him many more years of continued success.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE CONFERENCE REPORT FOR H.R. 3150

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to congratulate my colleagues, especially the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), on reaching an aviation security agreement that will provide unprecedented protection to our Nation's passengers and airways.

As we enter the holiday season, it is essential that the flying public feel confident about air travel, and today's agreement will restore full faith in flying. Aviation security is of particular concern in Rhode Island, where our State airport is located in a populated urban area. We must safeguard this facility and all of our Nation's airports from potential threats, not only for the benefit of passengers and workers, but also to allay the fears of people in neighboring homes and businesses. H.R. 3150's provision requiring all checked baggage to be screened by explosive-detection devices is an important step to enhance security and guarantee peace of mind to the traveling public.

H.R. 3150 will also provide a well-timed and much needed boost to the travel and tourism sector, which is the second largest industry in the State of Rhode Island. I have heard the concerns of airline employees and passengers, hotel workers, rental car companies, travel agents, and restaurant owners. We all agree that Congress must restore confidence in air travel in order to boost our nation's flagging economy.

Finally, this legislation includes a provision to federalize airport security, which is one of the most important commitments we can make to air travelers. Countless constituents have contacted me in support of a federal aviation screening force, and I am pleased that H.R. 3150 reflects the will of the American people.

Today's bipartisan legislation is an example of good government at work, and I urge my colleagues to vote for final passage.

IN TRIBUTE TO REV. VERNON MCGOWEN

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call to the attention of the chair and my colleagues a distinguished minister from the city of Neptune, NJ, Rev. Vernon McGowen.

Reverend McGowen has served as the minister of the Martin Luther King Jr. Presbyterian Church in Neptune for the past 25 years. On Sunday, November 18, 2001, his church will recognize his illustrious career and dedication to the Neptune and Asbury Park communities.

A Houston native, McGowen moved to New Jersey to attend the Princeton Theological Seminary where he earned his masters of Divinity Degree. While at Princeton, through the urging of a professor and mentor, he started preaching at Martin King Jr. Presbyterian Church. His dedication and compassion were evident after only 2 years of service, at which time the Church invited him to become the church's permanent pastor.

Throughout his tenure as pastor, he has been an outspoken advocate for people who normally have no way of making themselves heard. As a highly regarded leader in the black community, he has dealt with issues ranging from teenage pregnancy to the hiring of more blacks in county offices. Over the years, he has been recognized as a leading advocate of judicial reform and encouraging greater opportunities for blacks in the legal system. In short, parishioners of his church not only found a religious figure, but a civil rights leader.

Reverend McGowen practices what he preaches, using his talents to reach out to the segments of the community that need him the most. Through his tireless efforts, he helped Lawrence Lawson gain the appointment of assignment judge, the first black person to achieve this esteemed position.

Through his ministry he spreads the word of God and provides spiritual leadership, while simultaneously, he fights to improve the social well-being of all. Now entering his 25th year of service, I would like to congratulate Rev. Vernon McGowen on this momentous occasion.

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE WORLD TRADE CENTER CRISIS: THE IMPACT ON NEW YORK

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 28, 2001

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, on October 2, 2001, I introduced H.R. 2992, the Mental Health Parity Enhancement Act of 2001. Clearly, we all have come to understand mental health is critical to the health and well being of our country and all Americans. I rise today to submit compelling, timely remarks