

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Members of the House of Representatives join me in condemning these acts which took place at the hands of the illegal Turkish-Cypriot regime. Mr. Denktash has already harmed the people he is supposed to represent by denying them the opportunity to unite with their Greek-Cypriot neighbors and join the European Union in April, and it is absolutely detestable to see him silencing the will of his citizens once again. I urge my fellow colleagues to continue offering their support to the people of Cyprus, and request that the United Nations persevere in their efforts to bring about a fair and agreeable resolution to the longstanding division of the Republic of Cyprus.

THE REFERENDUM IN CHECHNYA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, last Sunday, while the world's eyes were focused on the momentous events taking place in Iraq, a constitutional referendum was held in the war-torn region of Chechnya. The referendum was held as part of the Russian Government's attempt to "normalize" the situation in that tortured part of Russia's North Caucasus.

For the last ten years, Chechnya has been the scene of a bloody war between armed Chechen rebels and Russian military forces. Hostilities were precipitated in late 1994 when, in the wake of Chechnya's attempt to secede from the Russian Federation, Russian military forces launched a fullscale assault on the Chechen capital of Grozny. There was a respite in peace from 1996 until the summer of 1999, when the armed clashes erupted anew. The roots of this conflict go back to Tsarist conquests in the 19th century and Stalin's brutal deportation of the Chechen people to Central Asia during World War II. Unfortunately, certain radical Islamic militant elements linked to international terrorism have become involved on the Chechen side, though the State Department has stressed that not all Chechens are terrorists.

Despite Moscow's repeated claims that heavy-handed Russian tactics in Chechnya are part of the war against global terrorism, the situation is far more complex. Many Chechens have taken up arms against what they believe is a repressive colonial power and wish to see Chechnya as an independent state that will be able to make the critical choice regarding the future of its people. As is so frequently the case, the civilian population has suffered terribly from the war. While both sides are guilty of violations of international humanitarian law, the Russian military and special operations units have been responsible for numerous and well-documented instances of gratuitous, brutal and mass violence against the civilian population.

During my years in the leadership of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Commission has conducted eight hearings and briefings on Chechnya. Witnesses, including a nurse who was present in a Chechen town where some of the worst atrocities by Russian forces took place, have described the appalling fate of the civilian population.

According to the U.S. State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2001, "The indiscriminate use of force by government troops in the Chechen conflict resulted in widespread civilian casualties and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of persons, the majority of whom sought refuge in the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia. Attempts by government forces to regain control over Chechnya were accompanied by the indiscriminate use of air power and artillery. There were numerous reports of attacks by government forces on civilian targets, including the bombing of schools and residential areas." The report continues: "Command and control among military and special police units often appeared to be weak, and a climate of lawlessness, corruption, and impunity flourished, which fostered individual acts by government forces of violence and looting against civilians." Among the examples of such lawlessness and impunity in the Country Reports were "... reports of mass graves and 'dumping grounds' for victims allegedly executed by Russian forces in Chechnya" and "cleansing" operations directed against guerrillas but resulting in deaths and the disappearance of non-combatants.

The State Department points out that Chechen forces also committed serious abuses: "According to unconfirmed reports, rebels killed civilians who would not assist them, used civilians as human shields, forced civilians to build fortifications, and prevented refugees from fleeing Chechnya. In several cases, elderly Russian civilians were killed for no apparent reason other than their ethnicity."

Against this unsettling backdrop, with an estimated 100,000 internally displaced persons living in refugee camps in neighbouring Ingushetia, and under the guns of approximately 80,000 Russian soldiers in Chechnya, the Chechen people have reportedly voted overwhelmingly for the proposed new constitution. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that a genuine assessment of the public will would have been determined under such circumstances. I would ask the same question I asked in a Helsinki Commission press release over a month ago: "Are we supposed to believe that this referendum will stabilize Chechnya while armed conflict between the Russian military and Chechen fighters continue to produce death and destruction?"

The well-respected Russian human rights group, Memorial, has charged that Chechens were pressured to vote with the threat of losing their pensions or humanitarian aid. A joint assessment mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe stated that "no group has been able to campaign officially against the referendum in the mass media or distribute literature arguing against the referendum," although some opposition opinions were voiced in the media. Incidentally, in the concluding communique of the 1999 Istanbul OSCE Summit, the Russian Government agreed that all sides should seek a political solution to the conflict, and avail themselves of the assistance of the OSCE. This commitment was seriously undermined when the Russian government evicted the OSCE Assistance Mission to Chechnya at the end of last year.

Mr. Speaker, the Bush Administration has stated that "... we hope [the referendum] can be the basis for a political solution to that tragic conflict." I find that rather optimistic. The

Russian Government might better instruct its military to stop terrorizing the civilian population, prosecute human rights violators and rebuild Chechnya. Then perhaps it would not have to hold referenda in Chechnya under armed guard.

TRIBUTE TO VICKI DOUGLAS

HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of both a friend and constituent of mine, the Honorable Vicki Douglas. Tonight, Vicki Douglas is receiving the Distinguished Citizen Award from the Shenandoah Area Council, Boy Scouts of America, in Martinsburg, West Virginia for her years of continuous service to her community and state government.

Serving as my first committee chair in the West Virginia House of Delegates, Vicki was a colleague and a mentor. To this day, I value her leadership and tenacity and applaud her dedication. Throughout her career, Ms. Douglas has worked tirelessly to bring women's issues to the forefront and promote the well being of all West Virginians.

It is a great honor to commend Ms. Douglas on her service to the great state of West Virginia and recognize this extraordinary achievement.

TRIBUTE TO MEMBERS OF OUR ARMED FORCES SERVING OVERSEAS

HON. CASS BALLENGER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to the members of our armed forces serving overseas, but I do not wish to use words of my own. I want to use those of my constituent, Miss Lisa Seviars. Miss Seviars is only ten years old, but her words are of an understanding far greater than her age. Miss Seviars wrote a poem which I would like to share with you now:

"THESE TROUBLED TIMES"

In this time of 2003, a troubled year ahead we see,

But lose no confidence for we are strong,
bounded by our
Nation's thoughts of liberty, justice and
freedom for all.

We are the ones who will stand tall,
When and if the economy falls.
We will not lose hope—we will hope even
more.

Stand at the thought we are free,
No matter what happens in other countries.
We will stand strong, we will not give in.
For the people of our land, we sent soldiers
out to fight.

So fearless, bold and courageous.
They are being sent to a new land,
Yet they show not signs of being afraid.
We will pray to God to keep them safe.
If he will, we will praise the Lord.
If they don't come back safe, most will say
"Why did you take my loved one away?"
The answer hides on a coin: "In God We
Trust"

Your answer is—we trust in God to keep them safe

For God is wise, and what you say is—
“The best way to die is dying free.”

I want to thank Miss Seviere for sending me her poem. I want to join with her and express my faith in our troops and my hope for their safe and speedy return.

HONORING MARY IMBRIACO

HON. ROB SIMMONS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Mary Imbriaco of Groton, Connecticut who is celebrating her 100th birthday on April 9, 2003.

Mary was born in Italy and traveled to the United States with her family at the age of 13. She grew up in the town of Groton and became a United States citizen in the 1930's.

Dedicated to her family and her community, Mary raised four children and worked almost her entire life, only retiring recently at the age of 85. Just 10 years ago she suffered a stroke. Her strong will and determination have helped her to triumph during this difficult time.

Today Mary resides in the same house that she has called her home since 1933. She has a passion for music and singing and brings many gifts to her community and her family. Mary's life is an inspiration to all who know her and I commend her on a lifetime of achievements.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Members of the House of Representatives to join me in celebration of Mary Imbriaco's 100th birthday. She is a blessing to our community and to this country.

Tanti Auguri!

SECURING BLESSINGS OF PROVIDENCE FOR PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES AND OUR ARMED FORCES

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I hope and pray for the safe return of our troops, and I pray for peace. I know that many other Americans do as well. I do not believe, however, that it is the place of government to tell Americans how or when to pray. Matters of faith are deeply personal, and it is one of the founding principles of this government that the state should not intrude upon them.

IN HONOR OF HUGH AND MARTY DOWNEY AND THE PLACE OF HOPE

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Hugh and Marty Downey of Ar-

vada, Colorado, who have dedicated their lives to over five hundred orphans in Matoso, Kenya.

Raising more than \$300,000 a year through private donations and small businesses, the Downeys are able to run a home and medical center for the children that is known as “the place of hope” or Lalmba to the people of Kenya.

Stationed with the U.S. Army as a communications specialist in Africa over forty years ago, Hugh Downey knew little of Africa and the role he would play with Kenya's children. Today, he and Marty spend six months out of the year raising 500 children in African grass huts and the other six months with their own grown children back in Colorado.

Home to 2.2 million out of 3 million AIDS victims, Africa has found itself in an epidemic affecting both children and adults. In Kenya, 190,000 deaths a year are caused by HIV/AIDS, so it is not surprising that the majority of the Downey's orphans were born to parents who died from AIDS. The rate of Kenyans contracting the AIDS virus has doubled in the past decade, and will continue to rise and affect children.

As AIDS continues to greatly affect the African economy and society, Marty and Hugh Downey have been called upon to educate and house an increasing number of orphans. Many African adults, because they suffer from AIDS, are unable to support their families—in fact, their children are forced to drop out of school and work to support their dying parents. As the cost for AIDS medication and school fees increase, most children have no choice but to begin working at a young age. By offering education and preventive AIDS medication for the children, the Downey's are giving these Kenyan children the chance at a future.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Marty and Hugh Downey for their dedication and commitment to bettering the future for over 500 African children with their creation of Lalmba and to wish them continued success with their chosen mission of mercy and hope.

HONORING CONGRESSMAN CARL D. PURSELL UPON HIS INDUCTION INTO THE PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN HALL OF FAME

HON. THADDEUS G. MCCOTTER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 27, 2003

Mr. MCCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing former Congressman Carl D. Pursell, who was recently inducted into the Plymouth, Michigan Hall of Fame.

Congressman Pursell's career in public service began as a member of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners. He was quickly elected to the Michigan State Senate, and subsequently to eight terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he held numerous leadership posts.

Congressman Pursell was a national figure in efforts to balance the budget. As Budget Task Force Chairman, he led the authorship of two federal budgets proposing no new taxes and no new spending. As the Ranking Republican on the Labor, Health and Human Serv-

ices, and the Education Appropriations Subcommittee, Congressman Pursell oversaw funding for all of the nation's job training, labor, health care, biomedical research, and education programs. Congressman Pursell also served on the Appropriations Committee, the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee during his tenure.

Carl, who once graced this chamber with his intellect, wit, and kindness, has been, is now, and always will be a tremendous inspiration to our community back home, and to this Congressman in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my sincere appreciation to former Congressman Carl D. Pursell for his fine service to our country as he is inducted into the Plymouth, Michigan Hall of Fame.

CONCERNING TREATMENT OF MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES HELD AS PRISONER OF WAR BY IRAQI AUTHORITIES

SPEECH OF

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 26, 2003

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, today I urge all Americans to unite in support of our troops now engaged in battle in Iraq.

Our Commander and Chief, with the approval of Congress, called our armed forces into action to disarm a rogue regime that threatens our freedom and security.

With our troops now in the line of fire, with more than 28 Americans having made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom, the time for protest has past. The time for unity has arrived.

We live in a free society where we all share the right to debate the best policies for our nation. And in a free society, each of us also has the right to assemble and to protest. These are sacred rights.

But once our nation has decided to act through our democratic process, and once our troops have been sent into harm's way, the time for debate and protest is over.

Just as we share sacred rights, we also share sacred duties. Today, with American troops in the field, we all share a duty to unite behind them and ensure that our actions do them no harm.

But if just one floor speech by a member of Congress, just one acceptance speech by a Hollywood director, or just one street protest causes Saddam Hussein and his forces to hold on for even one day longer, then those responsible will have done a terrible disservice to those serving so bravely in our name.

I would never question any American's right to speak or protest, I only question the wisdom of doing so at this time.

No matter what political beliefs we hold, we are all Americans—and those soldiers in uniform fighting on the front lines are our brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers.

Those who undertake further protests at this point only fuel the resolve of our enemy, and they must take full responsibility for their actions.

Perhaps some need to be reminded why we are fighting and what we are fighting against.