

young people see the need to keep these old crafts going, and they want to learn."

Simmons teaches workshops at SoBA and has students come to his shop for hands-on lessons also. He gladly welcomes visitors to his workshop on Charleston's East Side because he sees it as a way to pass on the old way of working with wrought iron.

"I bring people to look at the shop all the time," he says. "It reminds them of the past. You had to use these hands. There were no machines.

"The machines can cut the wood and the iron, but it's not the same. It's not the art. You can create so many things with that forge. You can really knock yourself out."

Of all the pieces Simmons has crafted, he says his favorite piece is the one he made at the Smithsonian Institute in 1975 and which has been on display there ever since. "The one at the Columbia (State) Museum and the one at the (Charleston International) Airport are the prettiest. The Smithsonian one with the fish, the moon and the stars might not be the prettiest, but it shows the country what is going on in South Carolina. So many people have seen it and can learn my craft. That's the piece I love the best, not for looks, but for its purpose in serving this country."

Simmons adds that although many people tried to tell him that the car would kill the market for blacksmiths, he never thought of leaving the field. "In the '30s and '40s, people told me that blacksmith was a dying art. I would shake my head and say, 'OK.' That didn't stop me. I didn't close up shop and go work at the Navy Yard or something. I kept on going, and made a great living at it. Not rich, but live well and take care of my family. Now I want to get people excited about it and pass it on.

"Craftsmen enjoy making things people have never seen. It's a joy. That's what keeps me going.

"I'd be in there beating on that forge right now if my health were good. But I do enjoy passing it on." •

THE BURMESE JUNTA'S PERSISTENT USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

• Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I recently read an article that appeared in the Washington Post on February 10, 2003 by Ellen Nakashima that details particularly repulsive human rights abuses committed by the Burmese military junta, whose brutal totalitarian misrule has shattered the lives of its citizens and ruined Burma's economy. I am grateful for Ms. Nakashima's excellent reporting, and am pleased to draw attention to this important issue. I will ask that Ms. Nakashima's article, entitled "Burma's Child Soldiers Tell of Army Atrocities," be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

Reports of widespread use of child soldiers, forced labor, and human rights abuse come as no surprise to anyone with even casual knowledge of recent Burmese history. Tragically, these recent reports are not "news," but rather business as usual in one of the world's most repressive countries.

While the corrupt military junta has recently been conducting a propagandistic offensive to convince naive Western diplomats that Burma can be a responsible member of the inter-

national community, the continual flow of evidence regarding Burma's gross abuses of human rights illustrates how hollow recent Burmese "reform" has been. Anyone duped into believing that the junta's decision to loosen the shackles that bind Aung San Suu Kyi, the democratically elected leader of Burma who has spent nearly a decade under house arrest, represents a liberalization of the junta should think again. Proof that the Burmese junta continues its repression of democracy came yesterday when the Defense Ministry announced that it had detained seven members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy Party, NLDP, members. Their treasonous crime appears to be distributing anti-government leaflets.

The Burmese junta maintains power through its gratuitous use of military force against ethnic minorities and political dissidents. Now, the evidence is overwhelming that the junta exploits children as young as 11 years old in pursuit of greater coercive military power. Human Rights Watch reports that Burma's army of 350,000 includes nearly 70,000 boys under the age of 18.

If these children are fortunate enough to survive the physical and emotional abuse heaped on them by their military superiors during their "training," they are then forced into combat, often against domestic Karenni and Shan minorities. As part of the ethnic cleansing and intimidation campaigns the Burmese junta has conducted against these ethnic minorities for decades, these children soldiers are often encouraged to torture, rape, and kill innocent villagers. In one instance, Burmese military commanders ordered some of these child soldiers to force Karenni villagers to clear a minefield by walking through it. The children were subsequently ordered to shoot villagers who refused to walk through the minefield.

Recently, the Burmese junta has sought to improve its standing in the international community by touting its supposedly more intense efforts to curb the production and trafficking of heroin. Mr. President, this claim is laughable. American State Department officials should not be deluded into believing that Burma has become a partner in the war against drugs. Burmese child defectors from the army who now live in refugee camps in Thailand have corroborated reports that the Burmese military has fueled its soldiers by making them take amphetamines, washed down with whiskey, before going into combat. Countries that force drugged children into deadly combat should not be considered allies by the United States in any war.

In response to Human Rights Watch's report, a Burmese military spokesman denied that Burma "recruits" underage soldiers and incredulously asserted that Burma's military is an all-volunteer army. Such brazen lies should convince no one that the Burmese government has changed its repressive ways.

If Than Swe, as head of the Burmese government, is committed to upholding international standards of human rights, it can begin by enacting meaningful and verifiable economic, political, and judicial reforms. It should release the seven NLDP members it has unjustly arrested and all other political prisoners, and it should allow Aung San Suu Kyi to meet and communicate freely with Burmese citizens throughout the country, as well as with international representatives. Until the Burmese junta agrees to hold free and fair elections to allow the Burmese people the opportunity to choose their own leaders, it must be aware that American sanctions will continue.

I ask that the article to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 10, 2003]

BURMA'S CHILD SOLDIERS TELL OF ARMY ATROCITIES

(By Ellen Nakashima)

He was taught how to hold an assault rifle and aim it at an enemy. He was taught how to pull a trigger, aim at the next enemy and pull the trigger again. He learned all this, he says, by the time he was 12, when he was officially declared a soldier of Burma and sent to the front lines of a long-running civil war.

Now 14, the taciturn boy Kyaw Zay Ya lives in a rebel-held village in Burma near the Thai border, one of the few places in the country willing to protect him from service in what human rights monitors call the largest child army in the world.

According to New York-based Human Rights Watch, Burman's army of 350,000 includes as many as 70,000 youths under 18. A study the group issued last October found that rebel groups fighting the army also use child soldiers, though in far smaller numbers.

The numbers would make the military-ruled Burma, also known as Myanmar, the worst violator of international laws against using children in armed conflicts, Human Rights Watch contends.

The Burmese government has denied that its army takes in recruits under 18, and says that its force is all volunteer. But people interviewed in safe houses and camps along the border disputed those contentions.

In a two-hour talk here, Kyaw said he was press-ganged into the army at age 11, took part in combat repeatedly and felt "afraid and very far from home."

Another young man, Naing Win, said he was 16 when he was ordered into a nasty firefight. To fuel the soldiers, he said, the commander made them take amphetamines, washed down with whiskey. The troops, Naing recalled, "got very happy."

In the encounter, each soldier was ordered to lob five grenades at the enemy. Naing, whose forehead bears a shrapnel scar, said he was sufficiently high on the drugs that at one point he was throwing stones. With one grenade, he forgot to remove the pin that allows it to explode. Then he was ordered to run forward exposed to enemy fire, retrieve the grenade, take out the pin and throw it again. The battle killed his best friend, 15.

Another time, after his unit had won a battle against ethnic Karenni rebels, his commander wanted the area cleared of mines. But 40 Karenni villagers were made to walk through the mined zone, he said. In the ensuing explosions, some died and some lost their legs. Those who survived were lined up. Naing said he and several other soldiers were ordered to shoot them. They did.

"I'm very sorry," he said.

For much of Burma's history since it gained independence in 1948, the national army has been fighting guerrilla armies fielded by ethnic groups that want control of their own affairs and regions. Currently, army operations consist largely of low-intensity conflicts against a handful of opposition groups, notably the Shan State Army, the Karen National Liberation Army and the Karenni Army.

The army has a major advantage in numbers over these groups, none of which has more than 15,000 troops, according to Karen and Karenni officials and Human Rights Watch, but they say the army still employs underage soldiers.

"Children are picked up off the street when they are 11 years old," said Jo Becker, child advocacy director for Human Rights Watch. "Many have no chance to contact their families and see their parents again. Everyone we had talked to had been beaten during the training. Most were desperately unhappy."

The Burmese government denies the charges. "I am totally flabbergasted at the assertions in the Human Rights Watch report," said Col. Hla Min, deputy head of the Defense Ministry's International Affairs Department in the capital, Rangoon. "The Myanmar Defense Forces does not recruit underage and, in fact, MDF is a voluntary army. Today, after 98 percent of all the insurgents have made peace with the government, there is not much need for recruitment as accused by certain quarters."

In a faxed reply to a query, he stated that the Burmese troops are now engaged in work similar to that of the U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression.

U Kyaw Tint Swe, Burma's ambassador to the United Nations, said in a statement to the U.N. Security Council on Jan. 14 that "there is no credible evidence of the use and recruitment of children by the Myanmar armed forces."

U.S. policy is that people can enlist in the military at age 17, but must be at least 18 to serve on front lines.

In an interview, a 19-year-old named Aung, who asked that his full name not be used, said he was taken into the army in 1998 at age 14 after seven years in an army-run prep camp, named Ye Nyunt. There he and others learned to march in straight rows, clean guns and recognize land mines. Aung was 9 when he first picked up a gun, a standard army-issue G-3. The gun was taller than he was, he recalled.

Aung though that after he finished his studies, he would become an army captain. But one June day in 1998, when he was 14, a general showed up at the school. All boys older than 13 who had not finished the 10th grade were pulled aside. He and his schoolmates thought they were just being sent to another class. Instead, they were trucked to a holding center in Mandalay. "I got to the army by force," he said, "not voluntarily."

Aung said he first saw battle at the age of 15, and he was sick for three days afterward. But he grew used to it: In the following two years, he took part in seven major firefights and countless minor skirmishes, he said.

The worse battle lasted from early morning into the evening, in the village of Loi Lin Lay in 1999. The fighting began at the back of the village and by afternoon had moved to the front, where he and his friend, another 15-year-old, were deployed. By nightfall, most of his Burmese counterparts were dead. "During the fighting, you don't have time to think," he says. "Only shoot."

He said he felt powerless to resist. In the army, "if a bad person gives an order, you have to follow it. If he says burn the village, you have to burn it. If he says kill a person, you have to do it."

Naing Win, the boy soldier who recounted use of amphetamines, said in an interview that he was picked up at a train station near Mandalay when he was 15. Authorities found he had no identification card and gave him a choice: Join the army or go to prison. He was forced into a truck with 40 other people, 16 of whom were boys. They were taken to an army base, then to a holding camp for recruits.

If a boy refused to eat his food, was late or missed a task, the other soldiers would often be forced to beat the victim with bamboo strips or a whip, Naing said. There were other forms of punishment, the former soldiers said, such as jumping in the sand like frogs for 10 minutes, or lying flat on the ground and staring at the sun.

One boy was stripped naked, his hands and legs tied, Naing recalled. After 20 or 30 blows, his skin was bloody. An officer rubbed salt into the wounds on his back. The boy screamed in pain. Hours later, he was dead.

But not all officers were harsh, said Kyaw, who recounted being plucked for military service from a bus stop near Rangoon at age 11. One officer let the boys watch videos, including James Bond movies. Others would arrange surreptitious meetings between a youngster and his parents.

In the field, they had duties that included rounding up villagers in rebel areas to serve as porters, the former soldiers said. Those who balked or could not keep up were beaten or killed. Naing said he also witnessed Karenni villagers being raped. A general told the soldiers that raping women serves "to give the soldiers energy."

"Some of my friends said, 'It's okay. They're not Burmese. They're Karenni.'" Once, he said, he saw a teenage girl being raped repeatedly in an open field in the evening. First came the battalion leader, then a bodyguard, then ordinary soldiers. She was screaming and crying. She was left to die, he said.

All three of the former soldiers said they eventually deserted.

Naing fled in 1995, after six years in the army. He married a Karenni woman and joined the Burma Patriotic Army, a group of 30 fellow deserters whose aim is to oppose the central government in Rangoon. He said he has pretty much abandoned hope of seeing his family in Mandalay province again, unless there is a change in government. He still dreams about his friend who was killed.

Aung escaped in May 2001. Today, he lives in a Thai town near the border and works odd jobs. He is waiting for the political situation to change, so that he can return home to Rangoon province. The only way he expects that to be possible is if "people in the outside world put a lot of pressure on the government."

And last September, after three years in uniform, Kyaw was bathing alone in a stream near a waterfall. No one was watching. He bolted. After walking for four hours, he reached a Karen village, where soldiers tied his hands and punched him, thinking he might be a spy. After he convinced a Karen officer that he was a true deserter, he was given refuge in a border village.

He does not dare to go home. "They will put me in prison," he said. He has no desire to resume studying. His only desire is to be a kickboxer one day, like his favorite Burmese boxers Shwe da Win and Wan Chai. He says he does not think much about the army. He has no nightmares. "I don't dream," he said.●

COMMENDING LINDA MORGAN

● Mr. HOLLINGS. Madam President, I want to pay tribute to an outstanding

public servant, Linda Morgan, as she prepares to leave the Surface Transportation Board next month. She has been a Commissioner of the Board, and its predecessor, the Interstate Commerce Commission, since 1994, much of that time as Chairman. As such, she demonstrated real leadership, presiding when there were difficult years for the railroad industry as many companies merged.

I know Linda's excellent work firsthand. She served for 15 years as a professional staff member with the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and I was proud to name her the first female General Counsel to the Committee. It is fair to say that Linda Morgan is responsible for much of the legislation that established the framework for today's surface transportation system.

Last month, the Washington Post interviewed Linda, seeking out her views on the railroad industry. I think it would do all members of this body well to read what this dedicated model of public service had to say.

I ask to print the following article in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 27, 2003]

RAILROAD REGULATOR LINDA MORGAN
RESIGNS

(By Don Phillips)

Linda J. Morgan, the federal official who saw the railroad industry through a decade of turbulent mergers, said she will resign from the Surface Transportation Board on April 8, almost nine months before her term expires.

Morgan, a Democrat who had a cordial relationship with Bush administration officials, had been asked to remain as chairman until the administration could name a replacement, a process that took a year. Roger P. Nober, a Transportation Department official, was named chairman of the three-person board in December. Morgan's departure as a member had been expected. She said she will not decide on a future career until after she leaves.

Chairman of that board and its predecessor, the Interstate Commerce Commission, since March 23, 1995, Morgan presided over the Union Pacific-Southern Pacific merger in 1996 that resulted in a meltdown in rail service nationwide, and the 1999 division of Conrail between Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation, which created serious service problems that were not solved for months. Those systems have recovered from their problems and service appears to be improving.

The Surface Transportation Board, in addition to approving rail mergers, also has some powers in regulating the commercial end of the railroad industry.

Morgan said she believes that the railroad industry has emerged from the merger period better, because the companies learned to pay closer attention to their customers and to day-by-day operations.

"This period without mergers has been good for the industry," she said. "For a time, mergers were the answer to everything."

But Morgan said she fears for the future of freight rail because the railroads, shippers, Congress and states are polarized over whether government should impose conditions to guarantee greater competition, which would cause freight rates to fall. Such "open access" proposals could hurt customers more than they help, she said.