

the Non-Commissioned Officer of Broadcast Production, assigned to the 99th Communications Squadron at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

Since joining the United States Air Force in 1990, Sergeant Pleasants has reached impressive degrees of achievement and has a distinguished record of service. Having served in such foreign locales as Portugal, Germany and San Vito, Sergeant Pleasants has earned a number of accolades. In 1994 and 1995, while serving at Kaiserlautern in Germany, Sergeant Pleasants earned two Air Force level awards for his reporting and won the regional and worldwide Air Force talent competitions as a singer and announcer. In 1996, while assigned to the Air Force News Agency's Regional News Center at Ramstein Air Base, he was a key member pioneering the two most award winning shows in Air Force history; Air Force Prime Time and AFNEWS: On Assignment. Sergeant Pleasants was reassigned to the 99th Communications Squadron at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada in 2003 where he immediately applied his expertise in Television and Production to revamp an inactive television program called Eye on Nellis. Through his efforts, the program developed into a monthly 30-minute news show reaching 14 million homes around the world and has won recognition as Best Commander's Access Channel in the Air Force.

Sergeant Pleasants' career is celebrated by a number of awards and commendations, having won the Air Force Commendation Medal three times, the Air Force Achievement Medal four times, Air Force Level Recognition thirteen times, and the National Defense Medal twice.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Sergeant Mark A. Pleasants for his distinguished record of service and his commitment to providing quality news service to the Air Force community. I wish him the best in his future endeavors.

CONGRATULATING DR. ANN VOGEL

HON. GIL GUTKNECHT

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Dr. Ann Vogel of New Ulm, Minnesota, on receiving the Sertoma Club's Service to Mankind Award.

The Sertoma Club is an organization that strives to better people's lives through philanthropic activities. Since 1960, the Sertoma Foundation has positively influenced the lives of its members and hundreds of communities internationally. Sertoma primarily focuses on service projects assisting the more than 50 million people with speech, hearing and language disorders. Sertoma also sponsors community projects to promote freedom and democracy, to assist youth, and to benefit a variety of other local community needs. Every year Sertoma clubs raise more than \$20 million for these local community service projects.

The Sertoma Club also recognizes the efforts of citizens who volunteer their time and service to the local community. The Service to Mankind Award, the highest honor a non-Sertoma member can receive, is awarded to an individual who has gone above and beyond the call of duty.

This year, The Service to Mankind Award was given to Dr. Ann Vogel by the New Ulm Sertoma Club. Dr. Vogel devotes her time to working at the Open Door Health Center in Mankato, a non-profit organization that seeks to provide care to uninsured and underinsured people in southern Minnesota. Additionally, Dr. Vogel led the funding drive for the Friends of German Park, a group dedicated to the redevelopment of the community area; while also dedicating her time as a storyteller with Bavarian Blast. Her community involvement also includes volunteering at Heritagefest and the Oak Hills Assisted Living Center.

I extend my sincere congratulations to Dr. Ann Vogel for receiving this commendable award. Her commitment to public service is greatly appreciated and an inspiration to all.

SIKHS CELEBRATE VAISAKHI, REVELATION OF SIKH NATION

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Sikhs on celebrating their important holiday, Vaisakhi Day, around the world. There were marches in Washington, Vancouver, London, and many other cities around the world. There will be a parade April 29 in New York, the annual Sikh Day event.

Vaisakhi Day marks the revelation of the Sikh Nation as a distinct entity by guru Gobind Singh in 1699. At that time, he proclaimed the Sikhs sovereign. Today, Sikhs struggle to reclaim this lost birthright as Indian troops occupy their country, Khalistan. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Sikhs declared themselves independent in 1987, but Indian troops to the tune of half a million continue to occupy Khalistan.

Recently, several Sikh activists have been arrested for simply making speeches, raising flags, or holding peaceful marches in support of Khalistan. Is this democracy, Mr. Speaker? Is this how a free country conducts itself?

Mr. Speaker, without the most basic freedoms, such as freedom of speech and self-determination, how can the Sikhs hope to survive as a people? In India, it is now illegal in many parts of the country to join another religion besides Hinduism. The intent to establish a Hindu state is clear.

We can help put an end to these practices as we congratulate the Sikhs on Vaisakhi Day. We must cut off our aid and our trade with India. Although there is a burgeoning middle class, half the country lives under the international poverty line. Losing our dollars would have a significant effect on India. And we must stand up for the principles on which America was founded.

About the same time in the calendar as Vaisakhi Day is the birthday of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote that government is legitimately founded on "the consent of the governed" and that "whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

Clearly, that time has come for too many of the minorities of South Asia—the Sikhs of

Khalistan, the Muslims in Kashmir, the predominantly Christian Naga community, and so many others. Let us help them to achieve the basic right of self-determination by putting our Congress on record in support of a free and fair plebiscite in these places on the question of independence. By doing so, we will be helping to achieve freedom, stability, peace, dignity, and prosperity for all the peoples and nations of South Asia.

Mr. Speaker, I request the permission of the House to add the Council of Khalistan's press release and open letter on Vaisakhi to the RECORD at this time.

SIKHS WILL CELEBRATE VAISAKHI DAY

APRIL 14

Happy Vaisakhi Day to you and your family and the Khalsa Panth. On April 14, the Sikh Nation will be observing the 307th anniversary of the day Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa Panth. The Guru granted sovereignty to the Sikh Nation, saying "In Grief Sikhin Ko Deon Patshahi." We must remind ourselves of our heritage by raising slogans of "Khalistan Zindabad" and beginning a Shantmai Morcha to liberate our homeland, Khalistan. Whoever is honest and dedicated in leading that Shantmai Morcha deserves our support. Every morning and evening we recite, "Raj Kare Ga Khalsa." Now is the time to act on it. Do we mean what we say every morning and evening?

The flame of freedom continues to burn brightly in the heart of the Sikh Nation. No force can suppress it. Within the past few days, Dal Khalsa and the Shiromani Khalsa Dal announced that they are uniting for sovereignty for Khalistan. This was met with chants of "Khalistan Zindabad." Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, whose own Legislative Assembly proclaimed the sovereignty of Punjab when he cancelled the water agreements, has ordered the leaders of Dal Khalsa and the Shiromani Khalsa Dal placed under police watch for their speeches. Kanwarpal Singh Dhani of the Guru Asra Trust, and Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan were arrested this month for making speeches in support of Khalistan. Dr. Chohan said, "Khalistan will be free." In January of last year and again in June of last year Sikh activists, mostly from Dal Khalsa, were arrested merely for raising the Khalistani flag and making pro-Khalistan speeches. During his recent visit to India, President George W. Bush walked over to Sukhbir Singh Badal and said, "Give my best wishes and regards to your people from the people of America." Even the President of the United States is aware of our situation. "I wish you could visit Punjab," said Sukhbir Singh. When Khalistan is free, that will happen. President Bush has said, "Freedom is the birthright of every man, woman, and child." These events show that the movement to free our homeland is on the rise. It has gotten the attention of the world. The movement to liberate our homeland is stronger than it has ever been and it has frightened the Indian regime. Now is the time to rededicate ourselves to the liberation of Khalistan.

The Indian government is reacting to the rising tide of freedom for the Sikh Nation. Earlier this year, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh apologized to the Sikh Nation for the Delhi massacres of November 1984 that killed over 20,000 Sikhs. It is good that he apologized and it clearly shows India's responsibility, but what good does it do the Sikh Nation? Where are the apologies for the Golden Temple attack and the other atrocities? Where is the compensation for the victims' families?

In January, Sikh farmers were expelled from Uttaranchal Pradesh and their land was

seized. They were beaten up by the police. Their homes were bulldozed by paratroopers. Their homes in many cases were built using their life savings and by their own hands. We condemn this act of state terrorism by the government of Uttaranchal Pradesh. As you know, Sikhs are prohibited from buying land in Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. Now Uttaranchal Pradesh joins that list. Yet there are no restrictions on land ownership in Punjab by non-Sikhs. People from anywhere can buy land in Punjab, including people from Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. India is trying to subvert Khalistan's independence by overrunning Punjab with non-Sikhs while keeping Sikhs from escaping the brutal repression in Punjab. It is incumbent on the Sikh diaspora to free Khalistan. We must redouble our efforts. That is the only way to keep these atrocities from continuing and to protect the Sikh Nation and the Sikh religion.

Any organization that sincerely supports Kalistan deserves the support of the Sikh Nation. However, the Sikh Nation needs leadership that is honest, sincere, consistent, and dedicated to the cause of Sikh freedom. But we should only support sincere, dedicated, honest leaders. Dal Khalsa deserves the praise of the Sikh nation and I call on every Sikh to support them and every other organization that is working to liberate Khalistan.

The Council of Khalistan has stood strongly and consistently for liberating our homeland, Khalistan, from Indian occupation. For over 18 years we have led this fight while others were trying to divert the resources and the attention of the Sikh Nation away from the issue of freedom in a sovereign, independent Khalistan. Yet Khalistan is the only way that Sikhs will be able to live in freedom, peace, prosperity, and dignity.

The Sikhs in Punjab have suffered enormous repression at the hands of the Indian regime in the last 22 years. The Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984. Inderjit Singh Jaijee and Bibi Baljit Kaur of the Movement Against State Repression (MASR) told me that if the Sikhs outside India had not exposed the atrocities of the Indian regime, they could have killed ten times as many Sikhs. Another 52,268 of our brothers and sisters are being held as political prisoners, according to MASR. Some have been in illegal custody since 1984! Over 50,000 Sikh youth were picked up from their houses, tortured, murdered in police custody, then secretly cremated as "unidentified bodies." Their remains were never even given to their families! How can Sikhs have any freedom living under a government that would do these things? India should be ashamed of the genocide it has committed against Sikhs, Christians, Muslims, and other minorities.

Sikhs can never forgive or forget the Indian government's military attack on the Golden Temple and 39 other historic Gurdwaras throughout Punjab. Over 20,000 Sikhs were murdered in those attacks, known as Operation Blue Star, including Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, General Shabeg Singh, Bhai Amrik Singh, and over 100 Sikh religious students ages 8-13 who were taken out into the courtyard and shot. These attacks accelerated the Sikh independence movement and deepened the desire for independence in the hearts of Sikhs, a fire that burns brightly in the hearts of the Sikh Nation to this day.

The Akali Dal conspired with the Indian government in 1984 to invade the Golden Temple to murder Sant Bhindranwale and 20,000 other Sikhs during June 1984 in Punjab. Among those who conspired with the government, according to Chakravarty: Web of Indian Secularism, were Dr. Chohan, Ganga Singh Dhillon, and Didar Singh Bains.

It appears the Indian regime is even willing to arrest its own agents to suppress the movement for Khalistan! Now Badal and Chief Minister Amarinder Singh have been accusing each other of being tied in with "terrorists." These leaders view support for Khalistan as terrorism, as the Indian government does. They have shown where their loyalties lie. How will these so-called Sikh leaders account for themselves? Remember the words of former Jathedar of tile Akal Takht Professor Darshan Singh: "If a Sikh is not a Khalistani, he is not a Sikh." It seems that Badal and Amarinder are not Sikhs.

Never forget that the Akal Takht Sahib and Darbar Sahib and the present Akali and Congress leadership are under the control of the Indian government, the same Indian government that has murdered over a quarter of a million Sikhs in the past twenty years. These institutions will remain under the control of the Indian regime until we free the Sikh homeland, Punjab, Khalistan, from Indian occupation and oppression and sever our relations with the New Delhi government.

Sikhs will never get any justice from Delhi. Ever since independence, India has mistreated the Sikh Nation, starting with Patel's memo calling Sikhs "a criminal tribe." What a shame for Home Minister Patel and the Indian government to issue this memorandum when the Sikh Nation gave over 80 percent of the sacrifices to free India.

There is no place for Sikhs in supposedly secular, supposedly democratic India. Our moment of freedom is closer than ever. Let us work to make certain that we shake ourselves loose from the yoke of Indian oppression and liberate our homeland, Khalistan, so that all Sikhs may live lives of prosperity, freedom, and dignity.

Sincerely,

GURMIT SINGH AULAKH,
President, Council of Khalistan.

OPPOSING PRESIDENT BUSH'S MARCH TO WAR IN IRAN

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the Iran Freedom Support Act. I certainly share my colleagues' concerns about Iran's apparent push to develop nuclear weapons, but I oppose H.R. 282 because I fear President Bush will use this legislation to lead America into an unnecessary war with Iran. This President used this same pattern in his last march to war in Iraq.

The resolution calls upon the United States to request that the United Nations Security Council impose sanctions against Iran. President Bush used Iraq's violation of similar sanctions to justify his initiation of the ill-fated Iraq War.

The legislation also authorizes President Bush to fund the Iranian opposition to radical Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad despite the fact that American support for pro-Western leaders has often backfired. In fact it's backfired in Iran before! America's historic support for the Shah propelled former radical leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to power. Is it any wonder then that the Washington Post recently reported that pro-democracy forces in Iran do not want U.S. funding since their association

with America taints their credibility within their country?

The United States spent millions of dollars in Iraq to fund the opposition to Saddam Hussein. In return, the Bush Administration received bogus information from informants that claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. The Administration then used this information to scare America into war against Iraq.

Finally, H.R. 282 advocates regime change and I find it difficult to believe Iran will cooperate with our diplomatic proposals if they understand our ultimate goal to be the overthrow of their government.

America can prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons through peaceful and thoughtful diplomacy. But this legislation sets us on the road to war rather than diplomacy. I therefore urge my colleagues to join me in voting against it.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO COLBY RUPERT

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Colby Rupert for his heroic actions following an accident on Interstate 15 on March 18, 2006.

Colby and an ambulance crew had initially responded to a pickup truck that had run off the road. While responding to the emergency, a bus heading southbound on I-15 struck their rescue unit, virtually destroying the vehicle. Colby and his partner were still in their vehicle at the time of the collision and received painful injuries as a result. Nonetheless, Paramedic Rupert administered aid to a number of passengers on the bus. He carried a generator and the Jaws of Life from the crashed rescue truck to the Greyhound bus while dragging his injured leg. Despite his serious injuries, he ignored his wounds and aided injured persons in a desperate and critical accident scene. Only after assistance arrived sometime later did Colby receive medical treatment. He had to be literally forced to stop assisting others so he could receive medical attention.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to honor Colby Rupert for his heroic actions. Colby's unwavering courage speaks volumes about his character. His dismissal of his own injuries serves as an example of the dedication our First Responders show in their service to their fellow citizens.

CONGRATULATING JULIE STEVENSON

HON. GIL GUTKNECHT

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mrs. Julie Stevenson of Worthington, Minnesota, on receiving the 2006 Athena Award from the Worthington Travelodge.

The Athena Award is presented each year to a woman who has demonstrated excellence, initiative and creativity in her profession.