

mastermind of the September 11 attacks, key al-Qaida operatives, and Osama bin Laden lieutenants, as well as the orchestrator of the attack on the USS Cole, which killed 17 American sailors. In total, I believe there are 241 terrorists who remain under military guard at Guantanamo—those who have been identified as too dangerous to be released.

The Attorney General, about a month ago, said about these detainees—and I am quoting now—for “people who can be released, there are a variety of options that we have and among them is the possibility that we would release them into this country.”

“Release them into this country”? I cannot imagine the American people being willing to do that.

Senator MCCONNELL asked a question of the Attorney General. He said: What is the legal basis for bringing these terrorist-trained detainees to the United States, given that Federal law specifically forbids the entry of anyone who endorses or espouses terrorism, has received terrorist training or belongs to a terrorist group?

It would be against U.S. law, as well as extraordinarily foolish, to release these people into this country, as the Attorney General intimated. As I said before, transferring them to facilities within our borders would create new terrorist targets.

The Senate has already spoken to this issue. In July of 2007, the Senate voted 94 to 3 that Guantanamo detainees should not be transferred stateside into facilities in American communities and neighborhoods.

So I repeat the question: Where will they go? European nations have said they will not take any of the terrorists because they cannot be integrated into their societies. Well, that is an understatement, to say the least.

Obviously, repatriating them to their native country has proven to be extraordinarily difficult too. That was obviously plan A. But these countries either, A, do not want them; B, could not take care of them; or, C, we believe would mistreat them.

We learned a lesson on repatriation in the case of Said Ali al-Shihri, who was returned home to Saudi Arabia after his release from Guantanamo. He promptly fled to Yemen. He is now a top leader of al-Qaida’s Yemeni organization. Yemenis, interestingly, make up the largest population of Guantanamo prisoners. But Yemen has been the hardest country to engage on this issue. Even if it agreed to U.S. demands, it might not be capable of honoring them.

In fact, there are many areas of Yemen today that are very poorly governed. Its borders are porous. I do not think there is any confidence that if prisoners were released to Yemen, they would not immediately go back to the battlefield and we would be facing them again.

We should also keep in mind the conditions at Guantanamo are very good.

Everyone who has visited there, I think, has agreed that the detainees are well treated, that they are exercised regularly, fed culturally and religiously appropriate meals, get medical and dental benefits—most far superior to any they had received before that in their life. They have access to mail, a library, are free to practice their religion. The International Committee of the Red Cross has unfettered access to monitor detainees.

It is not as if, in this particular facility, they are being mistreated. In fact, in this particular facility, they probably could be treated better than being returned stateside to some existing prison that would have to be modified in order to provide this kind of treatment for them.

I know of no better alternative than their current incarceration at Guantanamo. They are dangerous people who were picked up on the battlefield or in situations where we have very good reason to believe they are terrorists, that they would engage in terrorism or support terrorism if they were released.

We, obviously, are committed to moving forward because of the President’s commitment. I believe the Congress will be willing to work with the President on this very difficult situation. But if the President is going to ask the Congress for money, then the President has to be able to share with us what his plan is, and we will try to help. What I do not think we will do is agree, as the Attorney General suggested, to release them into the United States.

I think it will be extraordinarily difficult to house them in some prison in one of our communities. We clearly have not been able to talk our allies into taking them. It is very difficult to return them to other countries because of the potential they would either be mistreated or immediately go back to the battlefield.

The President has committed to doing something, in my opinion, without thinking through carefully the consequences of the decision and the difficulty of implementing the decision.

To the extent he needs help from Congress, he needs to bring us into the discussion and share with us what he intends to do. Because we are not—as the vote before the Senate clearly indicated—we are not going to endorse a blank check on this and say: Fine, Mr. President, whatever you want to do, even though it could have an adverse impact on our communities or on our country.

That is why, despite the fact there are very good reasons to support other aspects of the supplemental appropriations bill that has been proffered to the Congress, this particular piece has to be modified. Either the President has to make clear what he intends to do with the \$80 million, explain to the American people how he intends to move forward on this, or he should defer.

The supplemental appropriations bill, after all, is merely an emergency amount of money that may be needed in a place such as Iraq, Pakistan or Afghanistan, prior to the regular appropriations process taking place. If the President can suggest to us there is some emergency need for this money, then, obviously, we can consider that. But absent that, there is no reason to put it in the supplemental appropriations bill—a bill we need to pass because of the emergencies that do exist in places such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

But short of explaining to us what he wants to do with the \$80 million, I do not think this is something the Congress is going to be willing to include in the supplemental appropriations bill.

I would say this to the political operatives who sometimes get involved in these issues: Do not think that you can blackmail the Senate into supporting something such as this because of the urgency of getting the rest of the funds out into the field. Yes, those funds are important. But I think every one of our constituents would rightly be extraordinarily critical of any Senator who simply agreed *carte blanche* to appropriate \$80 million if that meant these prisoners could be released into their communities or even be put behind bars in their communities. We have already spoken out against that, so that should not be part of the plan.

I think it is very important the President understands the Senate cannot approve a bill that has this kind of appropriation in it without bringing us into the process, getting our counsel as to how to deal with the problem, and then ask for our support for the funding to execute that particular plan.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Mr. MARTINEZ. Madam President, this Sunday, individuals around the world will mark World Press Freedom Day by recognizing the plight of journalists in nations where their rights are not accorded under the law.

Sadly, this includes many living in our own hemisphere.

In Cuba, the repressive regime has gone to great lengths to extinguish freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and independent thought.

Many have had their homes invaded, their families blacklisted, and their lives ruined for merely reporting the facts about the reality of Cuba under the Castro brothers’ dictatorship.

Six years ago, in a massive crack-down on independent civil society activists, more than 100 people were detained, with 75 suffering prosecution and then later imprisonment. Of the 75 targeted by the regime for imprisonment, 35 were writers, journalists or independent librarians.

Because in Cuba the repression has been such that people are not allowed to even go to a library and read books that might be banned by the regime, individuals began to have home libraries where people could come and check out a book or read a book that might otherwise not be permitted by the Government. These people were imprisoned along with others who, in a fledgling kind of way, attempted to report conditions in Cuba.

Today, 22 of these courageous individuals remain imprisoned. In the intervening 6 years, they have been joined by others who dared to express independent thought.

Among those arrested during the 2003 "Black Spring" crackdown was Jose Luis Garcia Paneque, a doctor who became a journalist with the independent news agency Libertad—or "freedom"—in Las Tunas Province. In 2003, Cuban state security searched his home and seized his personal possessions. He was prosecuted and convicted under Cuba's Orwellian penal code for acting "against the independence or the territorial integrity of the state."

He was sentenced to 24 years in prison—imagine, 24 years in prison—for a crime of being "against the independence or the territorial integrity of the state." In fact, he was just a free journalist. He was sentenced to 24 years. He is limited to one family visit every 45 days. His health, understandably, has deteriorated and there is genuine concern for his well-being. For advocating on his behalf, the regime accused his wife of espionage and conspired to organize mobs outside their home. These government-inspired mobs threatened to burn the house while the family feared for their lives and were still inside the home. His wife and children were forced to flee the country, all because he dared to speak the truth.

Another independent journalist jailed by the regime is Normando Hernandez Gonzalez from Camaguey Province. Hernandez Gonzalez was arrested by the regime for reporting on the conditions of state-run services in Cuba and for criticizing the government's management of issues such as tourism, agriculture, fishing, and cultural affairs. He too was convicted for acting against "the independence or the territorial integrity of the state."

Following his arrest and 25-year sentence, Hernandez Gonzalez was placed in solitary confinement, allowed only 4 hours of sunlight per week, and limited communication with his family. Prison authorities encouraged inmates to harass Hernandez Gonzalez, according to his wife Yarai Reyes Marin. It is no surprise his health has declined during his imprisonment.

As technology makes incremental advances in Cuba, the regime continues to clamp down on those using it to speak freely. Around the world, bloggers share information as fast as they receive it, but Cuban bloggers are lucky to have their messages penetrate the regime's repressive Internet restrictions.

One blogger who has found a way to report on the struggles of Cuban society is a woman named Yoani Sanchez. Sanchez is able to blog, but she does so at great risk of regime retribution at any moment. By e-mailing her observations on daily life in Cuba to friends outside the country, who then post them on line, she faces potential prosecution and imprisonment. Despite the risks, Sanchez eloquently expresses her support for freedom of expression. In one post she said:

State control over the media remains intact, even though technological developments have helped people find parallel paths to keep themselves informed. Illegal satellite dishes, the controlled Internet, and books and manuals brought in by tourists have shaken the government's monopoly on providing news.

Like many other supposed "freedoms" in Cuba, the Cuban constitution actually provides for speech as long as it "conforms to the aims of socialist society."

According to the State Department's 2008 report on Cuba's human rights, anyone engaged in:

disseminating "enemy propaganda"

—is how they label it—

which includes expressing opinions at odds with those of the government, is punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

Imagine 14 years in prison for disseminating "enemy propaganda," as they determine it.

We here in the United States, with our traditions of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, often take our freedoms for granted. As we near the 3rd of May—a day in honor of free press around the world—I urge my colleagues to consider all those who are suffering for exercising their inalienable right to free speech.

I have a list here I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD. It lists all of those who are presently in prison in Cuba as a result of their desire to express themselves freely in violation of the dictates of the regime.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Ricardo Severino Gonzalez Alfonso, Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, Hector Fernando Maseda Gutierrez, Pedro Arguelles Moran, Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona, Mijail Bargaza Lugo, Juan Adolfo Fernandez Sainz, Miguel Galvan Gutierrez, Julia Cesar Galvez Rodriguez, Jose Luis Garcia Paneque, Lester Luis Gonzalez Penton, Ivan Hernandez Carrillo.

Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta, Regis Iglesias Ramirez, Jose Ubaldo Izquierdo Hernandez, Jose Miguel Martinez Hernandez, Pablo Pacheco Avila, Fabio Prieto Llorente, Alfredo Manuel Pulido Lopez, Blas Giraldo Reyes Rodriguez, Omar Rodriguez Saludes,

Omar Moises Ruiz Hernandez, Raymundo Perdigon Brito, Oscar Sanchez Madan, and Ramon Velazquez Toranzo.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Madam President, today I will be introducing a resolution on World Freedom Day, if I may have another second to finish, and as I do, I hope many of my colleagues will join in this resolution. There may be some of us in this body who might differ on the best approach to bring freedom to Cuba. There ought to be no dissent on the issue that we all stand on the side of those who seek to freely express themselves in the midst of a very oppressive regime. So I hope we will have a lot of support for this resolution which I will be presenting later today.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Madam President, how much time is left, or would we be able to secure 20 minutes for Senator GRAHAM and myself?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority controls 7 minutes, and the majority controls 8 minutes.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I ask unanimous consent to have 20 minutes for Senator GRAHAM and myself. If there is something else that is scheduled, I am happy to scale that back.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GUANTANAMO BAY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Madam President, I wish to be notified at 10 minutes so I can assure that Senator GRAHAM of South Carolina can also speak.

We are speaking today on a very important subject. We are urging President Obama today to reconsider the decision to close Guantanamo Bay until he can reassure the American people that there is a viable alternative for detaining terrorist combatants.

Let there be no mistake. We are fighting a war on terror. This is a war that is just as important as any we have ever fought. Every war that we have fought for almost two centuries in this country has been a fight for freedom, and this is a fight for freedom too.

When President Obama announced by Executive order that he would close Guantanamo Bay, my initial reaction was, What are we going to do with these prisoners? What is the plan? We have not seen a plan, yet we have an order that says we are going to execute a closing of Guantanamo Bay with no plan for what we do with them.

I have been to Guantanamo Bay. I have visited that prison. I can tell my colleagues that in my observation and everything that we have learned since, the prisoners are being treated with respect. They are being well fed. They get health care coverage they have never had in their lives. Yet President Obama is saying we are going to close it even though we don't know what we are going to do with those prisoners.