

Before being released from prison in 2007, he spent 17 years as a political prisoner due to his peaceful advocacy for democracy in Cuba.

He and his wife, also photographed here, Iris Perez Aguilera, have been detained, harassed, spat upon, and beaten innumerable times since his release in 2007 from prison. But Antunez never gives up. He told me this morning he has a new blog, “Ni me callo, ni me voy”—“I won’t shut up, I won’t leave.”

I not only learn, Mr. Speaker, when I am able to speak with Antunez, I receive strength from his courage, patriotism, and devotion to the struggle for Cuba’s freedom.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. RICHARDSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. RICHARDSON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DESTRUCTION AND DEVASTATION IN THE FIFTH DISTRICT OF OHIO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to remember the five lives of five constituents from my district who were killed this past weekend as a severe thunderstorm which produced two tornados swept across my district, leaving a trail of absolute destruction and devastation.

Mary Walters and her 4-year-old son, Hayden, in addition to Ted Kranz, Kathy Hammitt, and Bailey Bowman, all died during the storm.

On Sunday I rode with the Fulton County sheriff, and on Monday I rode with the Lake Township, Wood County chief of police to get a firsthand view of the devastation left behind by these tornados. During these visits, I spoke with many residents who survived the storms and heard them relate their miracle tales of survival.

I also want to recognize the 2010 graduating class of Lake High School in Wood County for their steadfast will and character in the wake of this deadly storm. One of the tornadoes hit Lake High School, completely destroying the school. This happened only hours before the senior class of 110 students were scheduled to hold their commencement ceremony Sunday afternoon. And, sadly, the class valedictorian, Katie Kranz, lost her father during that storm.

The true character, compassion, and strength of the people of America come

through in times like these, as the surrounding communities have stepped up to help in whatever way possible during the recovery effort. The local chapter of the Red Cross and other volunteer organizations were quickly on the ground to lend their support.

The local elected officials and administrators of Wood and Fulton Counties should also be commended for their organization and leadership during these trying times. Their quick response to help those in need has held the community together during this time.

I also want to commend other communities in the area, like the city of Northwood, who helped by letting the Lake Township Police use its communications headquarters after the Lake Township Police Department was destroyed, as well as the administration building.

The city of Oregon has lent three police cruisers to the township, as well as the Wood County sheriff lending two. Why? Because the Lake Township lost six of their cars during the storm.

Yesterday I sent a letter to President Obama requesting that Wood and Fulton Counties be declared Federal disaster areas as soon as possible. This will be important for the counties so that they may have access to as many resources as possible during the recovery efforts.

This afternoon, Governor Strickland is also asking for a declaration for Federal assistance, and I thank him for it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFazio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING THE LEGACY OF COACH KENNETH CARTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, after 49 years of dedicated service to the Marietta community, Coach Kenneth Carter is retiring from his position with the Physical Education and Health Department and as a tennis coach for Marietta High School.

Coach Carter has been a dedicated educator and a role model for sports teams in the Marietta school district for as long as I can remember. He has coached football, basketball, track, and, most memorably, tennis, where he had a record of 16 consecutive wins, one State championship, and nine region championships.

He received the Georgia Tennis Coach of the Year award and also was inducted with the 1985 tennis team into the Marietta High School Hall of Fame.

Prior to his career with Marietta City Schools, Ken Carter worked for

the Atlanta YMCA, teaching and training children. He drove a bus back and forth from the Y, making sure that underprivileged kids had access to the facility. Coach Carter has always said that behavior is the number-one problem with youths, and the training he gave at the YMCA taught kids how to be both good athletes and good people.

It was here that Coach Carter met the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. King went to the YMCA often to swim, and Carter would listen to his stories about civil rights issues. Coach Carter says working with King was a source of personal inspiration and many life lessons.

Coach Carter has also been very active with his church and served as the superintendent of Sunday School for 22 years.

His dedication and selfless attitude are well-known, as Coach Carter has been recognized as the Outstanding Man of the Year, Teacher of the Year, and has also received an Outstanding Service Award.

Congratulations, Coach Carter, on your retirement, and thank you for everything you have given to Marietta’s school system.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GAZA FLOTILLA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, recently, Israeli military personnel intercepted a flotilla of ships headed towards Gaza. The world outcry has been deafening. It has also been misplaced.

The Israelis have been portrayed as committing violence in order to prevent food and humanitarian supplies from reaching women and children in the crowded Palestinian community of Gaza.

Yes, that would certainly be an outrage if that is what was going on. But the actions taken by Israel are aimed only at preventing rockets from being shot into Israel, not denying food or medicine to the Palestinians. The image in the public’s mind is totally distorted. And what the world needs to do is take a closer look at what is being presented to them.

Even Al Jazeera, the most prominent Arabic TV news station, could not block out the reality of so-called activists, peace activists, who were really thugs, attacking Israeli soldiers with lead pipes and clubs. The soldiers are seen refraining from using their weapons as they watch fellow troopers being beaten into a bloody pulp and lying on the ground, their lives in danger.

Well, who first initiated violence, the violence that we are talking about, is not in question. Even Al Jazeera could not hide that fact. Yet, photos of the wounded and dead who ended up—and these were wounded and dead activists, after they had started beating to death

the Israeli soldiers and, thus, force was being used in order to protect these soldiers' lives—well, only these pictures of wounded and dead so-called peace activists were highlighted in reports of this incident.

This distortion is intended to deceive the people of the world. The so-called activists created the violence that erupted when the flotilla was intercepted for inspection.

Now, apologists will simply say that those pipe-wielding thugs were justified because the Israelis should never have stopped and interdicted those ships aimed at giving humanitarian supplies to the people of Gaza. Well, why was that inspection necessary? Never stop asking that basic question. Why was it necessary for that inspection?

They weren't stopping the supplies; they were simply inspecting the cargo. Why are the Israelis insisting on inspecting the ships going to Gaza? Because Palestinian territory is being used to launch thousands of rockets and artillery at civilian communities in Israel from Gaza.

Now, the purpose of the flotilla was not to put food and humanitarian aid in the hands of the Palestinian women and children. That would have happened anyway because the Israelis, they just wanted to inspect this and then let that food and humanitarian supplies go forward.

No, that wasn't the purpose. The purpose of the flotilla was to prevent Israel from stopping the missile attacks on Israeli women and children by preventing Israel from interdicting weapons shipments into Gaza with the humanitarian aid as a cover.

No. These missile attacks from Gaza are, by anybody's definition, a terrorist attack. If the Palestinians want food and humanitarian supplies, end the rocket attacks.

□ 1830

Israel would be very happy if that happened, to let any food and humanitarian aid go into Gaza. And this is not an unreasonable demand on the part of the Israelis to at least inspect the cargoes in order to ensure that they are not being used to cover up the shipment of weapons that are being used to kill Israeli citizens. If you are launching explosive projectiles into Israel, Israel has a right to look at what you are shipping into your country to make sure you are not shipping in those items that are necessary to shoot these things into Israel and kill women and children.

So in reality, the so-called peace activists were not victims at all. They were belligerent, they were hostile, they were seeking more killing in the form of not only just killing these Israeli soldiers trying to inspect their ships, but killing more Israeli civilians through rocket attacks. They also, of course, are not just killing innocent people; they are undermining any chance for peace and reconciliation be-

tween the Palestinian people and the Israeli people.

No, those so-called peace activists were the villains in this situation, and those Israeli troopers who tried to at least inspect it to see that rockets were not being smuggled in, they were the heroes of the day. The world needs to seek truth in this issue and ignore the distorted picture they are being presented.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

THE ISRAELI BLOCKADE AND THE FLOTILLA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of the Special Order that I and Leader HOYER will be convening for the following hour.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, in the overnight hours of May 31, about 10 days ago, news broke that we now have become very familiar with—the previous speaker referred to it, and several of my colleagues have come to the floor this evening to talk about it—where a flotilla coming from Turkey was intercepted as part of the effort of the State of Israel to defend a blockade that was set up.

I want to spend the next hour talking a little bit about that boat and how it progressed, where it came from and why, and perhaps importantly drill into a little bit the idea of what the blockade is all about and what the history was. It is impossible to fully understand this issue only looking at it from the point of Israeli naval officers climbing on board a ship and saying, okay, I think I understand the story because I see that picture. That would no more be the truth than to watch the closing scene of Casablanca and say, okay, I understand what happened in this movie.

This was indeed a tragic thing. Anytime there is loss of life, anytime you have military officers, commandos climbing on a boat, something has broken down, something has failed. But what I don't think is fully understood, and still to this day isn't understood at capitals around the world, is who initiated this thing and why it was initiated.

Make no mistake about it, my colleagues, as Leader HOYER will be mentioning when he arrives here shortly, the condemnation that rang around the world against Israel is almost a default position in European and Arab capitals of the world. There is almost no surprise. It is also true that those very same quarters are the ones that criticize the United States at just about any opportunity. And in many of those same places you also see far too much joyous chest beating anytime something like this goes down where the United States or Israel is involved.

It was undoubtedly unfortunate that it occurred, but it didn't happen by accident. If you look at the history of this incident, it actually started not on May 31, when the sailors climbed aboard that boat, but it started on May 17, a couple of weeks earlier. What happened then? What happened then was the Israeli Government got wind of the idea that this flotilla was leaving from Cyprus, Turkey, and said, look, understand that there is a blockade around Gaza that controls what can get inside of Gaza for obvious reasons that I will go into further later. But, frankly, to stop weapons from going into Gaza, because it is weapons and missiles that have come into the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by the terrorist organization Hamas, that have been used to terrorize Israelis. Terrorize to the magnitude of about 10,000 rockets have left from Gaza since Israel left it in 2007 and Gaza was controlled by Hamas.

So they say we have an internationally recognized blockade that's been supported by both the Bush and Obama administrations to prevent ships from coming in without their having their goods inspected. So what the Israeli Government did is they reached out internationally to the sponsors of this boat and to the people on the boat and said, look, you are welcome to bring your supplies here to Gaza.

So it was on May 31 that this boat was intercepted off the coast of Gaza, but it was May 17 that Israel said, look, if you are interested in bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza, you are welcome to do it. All you have to do is bring it into Ashdod, which is right here, and we will look at the goods, make sure there is nothing dangerous in there, and then we will allow it to be escorted into Gaza via truck.

That's not an unusual occurrence. In fact, as of this morning 11,972 trucks during this period of time the blockade has been in effect have been escorted in just such a way. It's not unusual for humanitarian aid to come into Gaza. Despite much of the rhetoric we have heard from the international community, Israel facilitates it through a process.

Now, the people on those boats, this humanitarian boat that theoretically was trying to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza, said, no, we are going to take this flotilla of boats and we are going to go into the teeth of this blockade. They were reportedly warned repeatedly, and no one has disputed that.