

the realities of Castro's prisons before we think about rewarding the Castro regime in any way. Their sins are too great, and this is not a thing of the past. Their brutality and repression have been going on since the inception and still go on today. It has never stopped. It has never gotten better. It has never changed. It never will for so long as the regime is in power.

When I hear my colleagues come to the floor and talk about lifting the travel ban, I am compelled to ask, Why is there such an obvious double standard when it comes to Cuba? Why are the gulags of Cuba so different than the gulags of other places in the world? Why are we willing to tighten sanctions against some but loosen them when it comes to an equally repressive regime in Cuba, in effect rewarding them? Why are we so willing to throw up our hands and say: It is time to forget?

I don't believe it is time to forget. We can never forget those who have suffered and died at the hands of dictators anywhere, and certainly not in Cuba. It is clear the repression in Cuba continues unabated, notwithstanding the embargo, notwithstanding calls by those who want us to ease travel restrictions, ease sanctions, notwithstanding the fact that we have millions of visitors from other places in the world bringing billions of dollars, and still the repression goes on. In good conscience, I cannot do that. I will not step back.

I have come to the floor in the past to oppose any attempt to do that, to pass any bill that in essence lifts the travel ban on Cuba. I will continue to do so. I will continue to do so until we have the opportunity to make sure the Cuban people are ultimately free, make sure they have the basic fundamental rights that you and I enjoy in this great country, and to ensure the voices of all who languish in Castro's jails—for which the world seems to be deaf to their cries, does not seem to care, does not speak about, does not do anything about—will continue to raise their voices in this Chamber and beyond.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRAVEL TO CUBA

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, sometimes on the floor of the Senate, good friends disagree—perhaps not as often as some would think, but on occasion that is the case, and it is the case today, when I observed and listened to a presentation by my colleague from New Jersey on the subject of Cuba. I

am sure we do not disagree about some parts of this subject; that is, I do not like the Cuban Government. I want freedom for the Cuban people. We, I assume, both believe that and believe the imprisonment of political prisoners in Cuba—who languish in Cuban jails for exercising their right of free speech and who are doing that in dark cells—is wholly unfair and we should as a country do everything we can to try to bring the vestige of freedom to the Cuban people. I understand all that. I support that strongly.

I have been to Cuba. I have spoken to Cuban Government leaders. I have spoken to dissidents. I have spoken to people on the streets of Cuba. And I want Cuba, an island 90 miles off the shore of our country, to be a free country.

Let me describe how long Cuba has had Communist rule and, by the way, how many Presidents we have had during that Communist rule and, therefore, the embargo that has been leveled against Cuba all these years. Let me describe how many Presidencies that embargo has existed through. The Presidencies begin with John F. Kennedy and go through this administration. That is 10 Presidencies.

We slapped an embargo on the country of Cuba and punished the American people in the process by saying: We are going to limit your right to travel to Cuba. And we were going to shut off all commerce to Cuba, including, by the way, most of these years, a restriction on sending food and medicine to Cuba.

The embargo has not seemed to work very well. It is now 50 years old, and it still exists. Well, what has happened as a result of the embargo? We have now a debate about what should happen with respect to our relationship with Cuba at this point. My colleagues say: Well, don't do anything that would reward the Cuban Government. Far from it. I have no interest in rewarding a government that I substantially disagree with, a government that I believe throws innocent people in jail. I have no interest, nor do the people who support the bill Senator ENZI and I have now offered in the Senate, with 40 Senators cosponsoring it—we have no interest in rewarding the Cuban Government. That is not the issue. But we do believe the restriction on the American people's rights—the decision by a government that says: We are going to tell the American people where they can and cannot travel—we believe that is inappropriate. We do believe that ought to change.

So what I would like to do is talk about a couple things, including, No. 1, lifting the travel ban to Cuba and making it easier to sell food to Cuba. I was the person who changed the law 10 years ago that allowed for the first time just a crack in this embargo that allows us to sell food into Cuba if it is paid for with cash. I think it is immoral for a country to use food as a foreign policy weapon. I do not think food ought to be part of any embargo. I think that is immoral.

By the way, using food as a part of an embargo just hurts poor, sick, and hungry people. Do you think the Castro brothers have missed breakfast or lunch or dinner because we had an embargo on food shipments to Cuba? Hardly. So 10 years ago, I got the law changed. In fact, it was the Dorgan-Ashcroft amendment. I got the law changed. That allowed us to begin selling food into the country of Cuba. That was the first opportunity to make any changes at all in this embargo.

Now the question is travel to Cuba by the American people. Should we continue to say to the American people: You have no right to travel to Cuba. We do not like the Cuban Government, so what we are going to do is restrict the rights of the American people? We have been doing that for 50 years, and it is time—long past the time—for it to change.

Let me describe a letter that came recently to the House of Representatives.

By the way, the reason this issue has now come to the forefront is the Agriculture Committee of the House of Representatives just passed a bill that lifts the travel restrictions on the American people to travel to Cuba. It also makes some changes in the conditions under which agricultural goods can be sold to Cuba, which is very important to do as well because even though 10 years ago I got the provision enacted into law that allows the sale of farm products for cash into Cuba, in 2003, as a runup to the 2004 election, President Bush tightened all of those provisions and actually changed a rule so that in order for Cuba to purchase goods from our country; that is, agricultural commodities, they had to pay in cash before the commodities were even shipped. Well, that never happens in a transaction. You pay cash when you get the goods. But President Bush was attempting to restrict the sale of agricultural products to Cuba. So we need to fix that as well.

But the House of Representatives Agriculture Committee has now passed a bill lifting the travel ban. That means this issue is going to be front and center here in the Senate. Senator ENZI and I have the bill—it is bipartisan—that would lift the travel ban to Cuba, and we have 40 Senators who are co-sponsors.

Let me read to you a letter that was sent to the U.S. House of Representatives by 74 Cuban human rights leaders, dated May 30, 2010, just a month and a half ago. They said:

The supportive presence of American citizens, their direct help, and the many opportunities for exchange, used effectively and in the desired direction, would not be an abandonment of Cuban civil society but rather a force to strengthen it. Similarly, to further facilitate the sale of agricultural products would help alleviate the food shortages we now suffer.

The current Cuban government has always violated this right [to travel] and in recent years has justified its actions with the fact that the government of the United States

also restricts its citizens' freedom to travel. The passage of this bill would remove this spurious justification.

This is not from me or the cosponsors of my bill; this is from 74 Cuban human rights leaders.

As to the issue of lifting the travel ban—the one we have slapped on the American people in order to punish somebody else; we have punished the American citizens because we are upset with somebody else—here are people who support lifting the travel ban: a political prisoner, Marcelo Rodriguez from Cuba; Guillermo Farinas, a hunger striker in Cuba; Yoani Sanchez, one of the leading political bloggers in Cuba; Oscar Chepe, a former political prisoner; and Miriam Leiva, founder of the Ladies in White.

One of my colleagues recently had a poster I saw about the Ladies in White. The founder of the Ladies in White supports lifting this travel ban. They are not soft on Castro or soft on a Communist government. They just believe this travel ban should be lifted because it will be beneficial to their interests as leaders in human rights in the country of Cuba.

The sacrifices of those whom I have shown here in photographs, the sacrifices they have made in Cuba—sitting in dark prison cells, hunger strikes, and more—I think give them great credibility when they speak out on what is the best way to promote democracy in Cuba.

I indicated that I got a law passed that allowed us to sell some food into Cuba for cash. Since that time, U.S. farmers have sold \$3.2 billion worth of food to Cuba. I mentioned that in 2003 the Bush administration decided to dramatically change that to try to restrict the sale of agricultural products to Cuba, and they succeeded in some respects. We need to change that as well. It makes no sense to do what they did in 2003.

But let me try to describe what was done in 2003 so that everybody understands what happened. The President, trying to get tough in 2003, eliminated the people-to-people visits program with Cuba; eliminated secondary school education travel with Cuba; restricted family travel to Cuba by Cuban Americans; restricted amateur athletic travel; prohibited gift parcels with clothing, personal hygiene items, soap-making equipment, and so on; restricted religious travel; and then also imposed the cash-before-shipment rule in order to restrict the sale of agricultural commodities to Cuba. So that is where we have been with respect to what happened in the previous administration.

President Obama has taken some unilateral actions since taking office. He has removed the restrictions on Cuban Americans who want to visit Cuba for family visits, and he has authorized U.S. telecommunications companies to sell their services in Cuba. I think he should go further immediately, and I think he has the capa-

bility to do that by restoring people-to-people visits to Cuba, permanently restoring the original definition of the term "payment of cash in advance" so that farmers can continue to sell agricultural products to Cuba. And especially, we need here in the Congress to pass S. 428, which is the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act.

The American people have the right to travel almost anywhere they wish. They could travel to Russia in the middle of the Cold War. In fact, we sent our philharmonic orchestra, in 1959, right at the height of the Cold War, to play music in Communist Russia. They were not restricted. There is no travel restriction with respect to Russia.

The New York Philharmonic, in 2008, went to North Korea. And if you want to get a lump in your throat and feel really proud, go get the recording, the DVD, watching the New York Philharmonic play a concert in North Korea. It is extraordinary. But they were not prohibited from traveling to North Korea because you can travel to North Korea.

You can travel to the country of Iran. This picture is from the Office of Foreign Assets Control, which is the office down in the bowels of the Treasury Department that determines how they are going to enforce the travel ban to Cuba. They say:

All transactions ordinarily incident to travel to or from Iran . . . are permitted.

So let's review. You could travel to Russia in the middle of the Cold War. You can travel to Iran right now. You can travel to North Korea right now. North Korea is a Communist country. You can travel to China right now. China is a Communist country. You can travel to Vietnam right now. Vietnam is a Communist country. By the way, with respect to China, I am co-chair of the Congressional Executive Commission on China. We have the world's most complete database of political prisoners held in China. There are very serious problems in China with respect to imprisonment of innocent people who are now sitting in the dark corners of cells in the farthest reaches of China, political prisoners, and we don't decide because of that we are not going to allow travel or trade with China or Vietnam. We have decided that engagement through travel and trade is the most productive way to move those countries toward greater human rights. It is only with Cuba that our country has decided it is not a strategy that works at all. What works is punishing the American people.

So what we have done is decided we are going to punish the American people who wish to travel to Cuba by tracking them down—by diverting somewhere around 25 percent of the resources in the Office of Foreign Assets Control, which is a little office in the Treasury Department that is supposed to be working on tracking financing by terrorists. Instead, about a quarter of their time, I am told, is used to try to track American tourists who are being

suspected of vacationing in Cuba. When they track them down, they get after them. They want to levy a big fine.

I have described previously, and I will again, because my colleague who presented used a lot of posters to show what the circumstances are, but here is what the Office of Foreign Assets Control says with respect to travel to Cuba by an American citizen:

Unless otherwise authorized, any person subject to U.S. jurisdiction who engages in any travel-related transaction in Cuba violates the regulations.

So what does that mean? What are the consequences? Well, it means we are punishing the American people saying: We restrict your right to travel. So Carlos Lazo, a man whom I have met and who went to Iraq to fight for his country and who won a Bronze Star because he was brave and was a great soldier, came back to this country after having served his country in uniform, was awarded with great fanfare a Bronze Medal for bravery, and then was told, when he was informed—he had two sons living in Cuba and his older son was sick—you have no right to travel to Cuba to see your sick child. Unbelievable. In fact, I even forced a vote in the Senate on this question.

Sergeant Lazo, back from Iraq, with a sick son in Cuba was told: You have no right to travel. Unbelievable. Yet that was the case.

I have shown this photograph many times, but it is useful to describe how unbelievably foolish these policies are. This is Joan Scott. The Presiding Officer knows Joan Scott as well. She went to Havana to distribute free Bibles on the streets of Havana. For that, her government tracked her down and tried to fine her \$10,000. For going to Cuba to distribute free Bibles, this government is going to track its citizens down to try to fine them \$10,000.

I have met Joan Slote as well. She was riding bicycles in Cuba. She joined a Canadian bicycle tour and took a bicycle trip to Cuba. This government of ours tracked her down and tried to fine her \$10,000. By the way, this woman, I think, made \$1,100 a month in Social Security, and her government decided to try to attach her Social Security payments. What was her transgression? What was her crime? She took a bicycle trip to Cuba as an American citizen.

I don't think there needs to be said very much more about this. This is the most unbelievable policy with respect to Cuba. I have been to Vietnam, I have been to China—both Communist countries. We decided engagement through trade and travel is constructive. It works. It is why I assume the legislation Senator ENZI and I have offered is cosponsored by Senator LUGAR, the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Senator DODD, the chairman of the Banking Committee and chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs. They are part of the 40 Senators who have cosponsored legislation saying to our government: Would you stop

punishing the American people because you are upset with somebody else, and would you stop being so unbelievably inconsistent?

Don't tell us that trade and travel is a constructive way to deal with Communist countries and then tell us that dealing with Cuba 90 miles off our shore requires us to punish the American people by restricting their right to travel.

I say again: What right does this government have to tell an American citizen where they can travel? They can go to North Korea, Iran, China, Vietnam, but not travel to Cuba. That is obscene. It makes no sense to me. Aside from we ought to stop doing stupid things, aside from just that notion, we surely ought to decide that it is not in the interests of this country to have its government telling people how, when, and where they can travel.

I wish to finish by just saying this again. I don't deny there are substantial human rights abuses in Cuba. I have been there. I have talked to the dissidents. I have talked to the Cuban people who have come to this country who know of, who have seen, who have watched the unbelievable lack of human rights that exist in that country. So that is not the point. The point isn't to deny the charts that people show on the floor of the Senate showing abuse. I could bring to the floor of the Senate, as chairman of the commission that deals with China, dozens of photographs of Chinese prisoners held in the darkest cells in the farthest reaches of China who have done nothing but are suffering. But we have not decided as a country that we will restrict the American people's right to go to China because that exists in China. We have set quite the opposite policy. We believe the best way to promote a march toward greater human rights in China and Vietnam and elsewhere is through trade and travel. That is the construction that this country has taken for a long while, except with respect to Cuba. In that circumstance, we say, no, we must, we must, we must prevent Americans from traveling to Cuba.

I say, again, 74 leading Cuban human rights leaders have signed a letter sent to us from Havana, Cuba—74 of them—and have said: Lift this travel ban. This travel ban makes no sense. You want to help Cuba? You want to help the people of Cuba? Lift this travel ban.

I also would say again, if I can find the chart that I had, the very brave citizens in Cuba who have spoken out and who are widely recognized, who have suffered: Marcelo Rodriguez, Yoani Sanchez, Guillermo Farinas, Oscar Chepe, and Miriam Leiva, all of them have suffered in Cuba. All of them believe this travel ban ought to be lifted.

I hope this Senate pays some attention to that and finally sees we can't do two things at the same time: No. 1, stop punishing the American people be-

cause we disagree with another country's government and, No. 2, do smart things that allow us to find ways to push and move that government toward greater human rights for its citizens.

Lifting the travel ban will accomplish both because there are 40 of us in the Senate who have sponsored and co-sponsored legislation to lift that travel ban. When we have the opportunity for that vote in the Senate, I believe we will prevail at last—at long last—and we will prevail, and it will be constructive public policy for this country to have done so. Certainly, it will have lifted the yolk of oppression by a government that restricts the rights of its own citizens—I am talking about our government—that will lift the yolk of oppression that has existed for some 50 years by a government that tells its citizens where it can and cannot travel.

I don't want to hear any more about a government that tracks down a guy from the State of Washington whose father was a minister in a small church in Cuba, who immigrated to this country, and his father died and his father's last wish was that his ashes would be strewn on the church property in Cuba where he was a minister. So his son carried out his father's wish. He went to Cuba and took his father's ashes to the church where he once served and deposited them on the lawn by that church. For that his government tracked him down and attempted to levy a very substantial fine on that young man from the State of Washington.

I am tired of those stories. Those stories are an embarrassment about public policy gone wrong, and we need to fix it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

CROSS-BORDER THREAT OF ASSAULT WEAPONS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last month, Mexican President Felipe Calderón addressed a joint session of Congress, highlighting the dangerous role that American-made firearms play in the violence currently plaguing both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. President Calderón drew a link between the 2004 expiration of the U.S. federal assault weapons ban and a subsequent surge in violence in Mexico. In his speech, President Calderón urged Congress to reinstate a federal ban on assault weapons, a call I have long supported. By exploiting weak U.S. gun laws and corrupt gun sellers in the United States, Mexican drug gangs have amassed arsenals of military-style assault weapons. These guns have been used to kill thousands in Mexico and pose a grave and growing security threat to Americans north of the border.

Mexican law enforcement officials increasingly are being out-gunned by drug gangs bearing military-style assault weapons, .50 caliber sniper rifles and other high-powered weapons that

originate in the United States. Using trace data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, ATF, the U.S. Government Accountability Office, GAO, determined that from fiscal year 2004 to fiscal year 2008, over 20,000, or 87 percent, of firearms seized by Mexican authorities originated in the United States. Additionally, the GAO reported that the number of assault weapons within this total continues to grow. In fact, approximately 25 percent of the firearms seized by Mexican authorities in fiscal year 2008 were high-powered assault weapons, such as AR-15 and AK-type semi-automatic rifles.

However, the threat posed by assault weapons is not faced exclusively by law enforcement personnel in Mexico. Drug trafficking across the border into the United States has been increasingly accompanied by violence in the American Southwest, forcing police departments to combat criminals with military-style arsenals. Former Houston Police Chief Harold Hurtt acknowledged the AK-47 assault rifle has become the "weapon of choice" for major drug dealers, warring gangs and immigrant smugglers. "The reality on the street is that many of these weapons are readily available," according to Hurtt, forcing the Houston Police Department to consistently upgrade its weaponry to match the firepower of criminals armed with assault weapons. Just last week, Jeffrey Kirkham, the Chief of Police in Nogales, Arizona, reported that Mexican drug cartels have made death threats against his department in response to a successful drug bust. Criminals armed with assault weapons are a direct threat to American law enforcement officials and the communities they protect.

Reauthorizing a Federal ban on assault weapons would help to reduce violence in Mexico and the United States. When the first federal assault weapons ban expired in 2004, 19 of the highest powered and most lethal firearms became legal to purchase, including semiautomatic weapons that incorporated bayonet mounts or grenade launchers. In the absence of a ban, these lethal weapons continue to stream across the Mexican border, arming criminals and placing border communities in grave danger. The reinstatement of a Federal assault weapons ban has the overwhelming support of the law enforcement community, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate toward that goal.

REMEMBERING SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, West Virginia, the U.S. Senate, and our Nation have experienced an incredible loss. Over the last few weeks, this Chamber witnessed poignant eulogies and remembrances of the legendary Senator Robert Byrd. Much has been said and written since Senator Byrd's death on June 28, 2010.