

truck Tuesday morning in front of the Fort Mitchell Avenue home where she lived for 52 years. She was 83. "She loved making people feel good," said her son John Middleton, Kenton Circuit Court Clerk. "I think that's what's going to be the loss, not just for us, but for the whole northern Kentucky community."

It was raining Tuesday morning about 10:20 a.m. when Mary Middleton apparently took a bag of garbage out to a Bavarian garbage truck on her street. Police were still investigating how the accident occurred, but the truck hit Middleton in the street.

Emergency responders called for a medical helicopter but it was unable to respond because of the weather. Middleton died at the scene. The driver of the truck was taken to St. Elizabeth Hospital to be tested for drugs or alcohol, which is routine after a fatal accident involving a commercial truck, said Fort Mitchell Police Chief Jeff Eldridge.

The driver, John Boaz, has worked for the company for 15 years, said Bavarian spokesman Rick Bruggemann. "Our deepest condolences and prayers go out to the family," Bruggemann said. Boaz, who has an excellent safety record, was devastated, he said.

Accident reconstruction experts from Erlanger Police and the Boone County Sheriff's Office are helping Fort Mitchell investigate the accident.

Middleton's husband, former Kenton County Judge-Executive Clyde Middleton, was at home when his wife was hit. He called John Middleton at work and word quickly spread across northern Kentucky Republican circles. As Mary Middleton's body lay in the street covered by a sheet and shielded by yellow tarps, family and friends began gathering at the red brick home near the Fort Mitchell Country Club.

One of those friends, Shawn Baker, rushed to the home to be with the family.

"I admired Mary more than any person I know," said Baker, of Crestview Hills, who was in the Kenton County Republican Women's Club and several other groups with Middleton. "She had so much class. Mary was an organizer, a leader, and an inspiration to anyone who met her."

Though she was better known as a political wife, it was Mary who made the family's first foray into politics. In the late 1950s she ran for state representative at a time when the area elected men and Democrats, said family friend and Kenton County Republican activist Rick Robinson.

She then supported her husband through his two decades in the Kentucky Senate and more than seven years in Kenton County's top job before he resigned in 1998 after a controversy involving the awarding of a courthouse construction bid.

"She was the perfect political wife too, she pushed Dad to do the things and to be nice to people when maybe he didn't want to be nice," John Middleton said.

Mary Middleton grew up in Wisconsin but was adventurous and left to travel the world. After trying to see the world on \$10 a day, she ran out of money in France and had to telegraph her father for money, her son said.

She went to work for the YWCA, which sent her to work in Hawaii where she met Clyde, a Naval officer. She followed him to Japan and the couple married.

Eventually, Clyde Middleton ended up working for Procter & Gamble in Chicago. When he was transferred to Cincinnati, the Middletons settled in northern Kentucky.

"They got off the airplane and saw all the beautiful trees and said this is where we want to live," John Middleton said. "And northern Kentucky is a much better place because she was here."

In addition to the Salvation Army, she volunteered for the Red Cross, Church Women

United, Kentucky Symphony and at her church, Gloria Dei Lutheran. She was also active in the Covington Optimist Club, the Florence Woman's Club and Kenton County Republican Women's Club, which she founded 51 one years ago.

In 1981, she was honored by the Enquirer as a Woman of the Year. She was also a teacher at the McMillan Center Alternative School.

"She was everybody's mother," said Kenton County Sheriff Chuck Korzenborn, a Republican who counted Middleton as one of his first supporters when he ran for sheriff. "She was a person who had only one thing on her mind, what was good for the community and the people in it."

"Mary's fine, she's with her maker and with the Lord. She's fine, but the people down here are going to miss her very, very much."

On Monday, Mary Middleton drove a cancer patient for treatment at St. Elizabeth Hospital, something that she and her husband had done for years. On Tuesday, she was planning her regular visit to a nursing home, where she sat with friends and strangers alike.

"She was truly a humble servant," said Becky Sittason, whose grandmother Middleton was planning to visit. "She doesn't have to flaunt it or say 'here is who I helped.'"

Sittason, who has known Middleton since she was 6, only found out she volunteered as a bell ringer when she read it last year in the newspaper.

Of all the organizations she was involved in, the Salvation Army was special to Middleton, said both Baker and her son. She helped organize the charity's annual fashion show and would line up volunteers to ring the bell along with her.

"She would never ask anyone to do something that she wouldn't do herself," Baker said.

Middleton rang the bell for more than 20 years and recruited her entire family for shifts at local stores.

"It just makes your Christmas to know you've done a little something for other people," she told the Enquirer last year.

In addition to her husband and son John, of Edgewood, she is survived by her sons David, of Lexington; Richard, of Independence; daughter Ann Schmidt, of Orlando; and eight grandchildren.

"Each one of the children could say that they felt special," John Middleton said, "and they were her favorite; that's because she made you feel that way."

"She always went out of her way to do what's right and to make everybody feel the best about themselves," he said.

When she died Tuesday, there was a note on her desk she had just written welcoming a family that had recently moved onto the street.

"She didn't know who they were," her son said, "but she wanted to make them feel welcomed. People don't do that as much now days, but she did."

Funeral arrangements are pending with Linnemann Funeral Homes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMENDING THE MINORITY LEADER

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I wish to commend the minority leader for that beautiful tribute. I have been privileged to be on the floor several times when he has offered tributes to his constituents, and I always find them to be so beautifully written and delivered. I understand he writes them himself.

I was very touched by his memories of a special constituent. I wish him and all the people of Kentucky a great holiday season.

HOMELAND SECURITY BUDGET

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about the Homeland Security appropriations bill—one of the nine we approved this morning. I was proud to work with my ranking member, the Senator from Indiana, Mr. DAN COATS. I am very proud to work with the Senator from New Jersey, FRANK LAUTENBERG, who serves as honorary vice chair of the committee because of his seniority and expertise in this area. I wanted to put into the RECORD some facts about the bill.

This bill has been openly and publicly debated for almost 1 year. There are some very important components of the bill that I think are of great interest to the people we serve. First, the bill totals, for 2012, \$39.858 billion, slightly below \$40 billion. It is not one of the largest in our government, but it is neither the smallest. It is sort of in the midrange of departments, but it is a very important department—one just created, as you know, in the aftermath and the heartbreak of 9/11. It is a department that has had tremendous success in the 10 years but with a lot of growing pains. They had a lot of difficulty getting their feet underneath them and bringing in agencies from around the government to provide the frontline of defense against attacks to our homeland.

I commend Secretary Napolitano for the great work she has done in the last 2 years to strengthen this department, to make very tough decisions, which all our Administrators are having to make, about how to allocate resources and set priorities because we are reducing budgets. We are in the process of eliminating, trimming, and rescinding. That is very difficult because, frankly, almost everything we do on the Federal level is important to somebody, to some entity, to some State, to some business cluster or to some activity of the government. Despite the common refrain that there is a lot of waste, fraud, and abuse, the fact is, we have been shaving that, eliminating that substantially, over the last several years. Now we are down to the bone and muscle.

When you are defending a country, you need to have a lot of muscle. When you are defending a country, you have

to have a lot of brain power. Then you have to have a lot of backbone. That is what this bill represents, a lot of muscle and a lot of strength to defend our country. There is no guarantee we will not have another attack, but this is the bill that makes that less likely.

That is why I will fight, as chair of this committee, to strengthen it and to have reliable partners at the State and local levels because we cannot do this alone. We need our local police and our State governments' eyes on the ground, in neighborhoods—both in urban areas, as the Chair basically represents in Delaware—but we also need them out in rural areas, where we have very sophisticated and serious potential targets for terrorists in terms of power structure, power generation, electrical structure, energy structure, our ports, which are mostly in urban areas, but sometimes we will find a certain niche port somewhere out there sort of off the beaten path. We need to protect it all. So we have to be very careful, and the members of the committee worked very hard to allocate the \$40 billion that was given to us—\$39 billion—which was less than we got last year, in an appropriate way. It was less than we got last year, but the needs are greater.

Drug trafficking is increasing in Mexico, not decreasing. The pressures on our southern border are increasing, not decreasing. The need to expedite our travelers faster through the screening, both for commercial and vacation travel, is increasing, not decreasing. People think there is some kind of way we can come to Washington and wave a magic wand and make all these needs go down. Actually, as the needs are going up, we are flattening and cutting budgets, which makes it very difficult. My job—and I wish to get this point in—as an appropriator is made even harder, because despite the good work my ranking member has done on helping us to build this bill, as you know, the Republican caucus has been absolutely unmovable on putting any new money on the table—from any source.

We have tried, and the President has tried, to raise revenues from people making over \$1 million a year. Actually, you have to make over \$1 million to pay this surcharge. We have been unable to convince anyone on the other side—or very few—we have had one or two Republicans who have stood, and I am very proud of them—to say we have to put some more money on the table as we continue to cut programs to close the deficit gap and make sure we have the basics covered.

I think Senators MCCAIN and KYL think the basics are the border. They may be right, and I have supported them. We have added 1,000 new Border Patrol agents in the last year, but it costs money. We have had to find that money in this bill. So other things had to be reduced. I understand that. Businesses do that all the time. But businesses also need to sell more products and bring in more money. Businesses

also can increase the prices of products sometimes to bring in more revenue. We are having a hard time getting the other side of this body to understand that sometimes you have to bring in more revenue, as well as cutting, to make this work.

I am presenting a bill I am proud of, which is \$39 billion. It is going to be very difficult to go much further down and to continue to do that which I am going to outline that we do in this bill.

First of all, we spent a lot of time this year—because we had to—talking about disasters. This was the worst year on record for disasters in the United States—from fires in the West, to floods in the Mississippi, to hurricanes raking the Northeast, to tornadoes. We have just had our fill. The weather service, just last week, came out and said that this year, for the first time since they recorded this, we had over 12 disasters of over \$1 billion each. So this year, 2011, was a very tough year. Our members and I spent a lot of time talking about disasters, so I will not do that at this moment. We have done enough talk. We funded FEMA. It was a great victory for people who were looking for our help.

I wish to talk about what else the Homeland Security bill does because it is not just responding to disasters, which I am proud we took care of this morning. We also do a lot of other important work and fund a lot of other important entities in this bill, including securing our borders—the whole border—the northern border, the southern border and ports of entry. I think we have over 125. People don't realize this. They don't see it as they do if they live in Missouri or in Kansas or maybe even in Arkansas. They are not familiar with the borders along Texas or how big they are, and Arizona. But it is a lot of land that has to be covered, and it is the Federal Government's responsibility. It takes a tremendous amount of money to secure this border, but our country wants us to do that. So we have invested in more border agents, in better technology, and I am even trying to come up with some very cost effective ways to improve the physical infrastructure of the borders because not only do they serve to protect our Nation from people who should not come in, but we also have to get a lot of things across our border, such as all the commerce and traffic and vegetables and agricultural products and manufactured products that our businesses depend on to have good trade with Canada and Mexico.

With NAFTA, which is a very important trade foundation for our continent, we just can't close our borders and shut them down. We have to keep them open. America, unlike every other country in the world, is one of the only countries that both has to fight hard for our security but also remain open as a nation. This is a very hard thing to do. We have to have more research and technology, not less. We have to have smarter border crossings,

not the old-fashioned, out-of-date type. That is what our bill supports—or, I should say, we try to. We are having a very difficult time because no one will put a dime on the table. So we have to keep finding ways to do this.

We have to enforce our immigration laws. Everybody at home tells us they want the laws enforced. But it costs money to enforce those laws, and that is in this bill. As I said, we have to facilitate trade and protect our currency.

We also secure cyberspace, which is a whole growing enterprise in space that we are learning a great deal about. We will not be fighting wars the way we have in the past. Our enemies will be attacking us in very different and innovative ways—not army to army, navy to navy, or men and women on the battlefield, as we have become accustomed. They may be attacking our utility sector, trying to shut down our financial systems. We are so reliant and interrelated on all the digital networking. It is very frightening to think what could happen, and we have all been in classified briefings to understand what could happen. This bill helps protect all of our Federal agencies and businesses except for Defense. Defense protects themselves. Our bill has to protect the homeland and the private sector, and we have a long way to go—and not just big companies but small companies have to be protected, and we have to work in partnership with them.

Let me mention our TSA in aviation; we fund that. I also want to mention this for Louisiana: Our fishermen have had a terrible time. Maybe in Delaware and other places along the east coast and the west coast my colleagues will understand this. In the gulf, our fishermen are trying to make a living in the middle of hurricanes and oil spills and, in addition, we get crawfish and shrimp dumped from places such as China and Vietnam. So we need money in this bill to enforce those trade laws, and I stepped up and significantly enhanced that effort in this bill. I was proud to do it for the shrimping and fish industries in our country, and particularly along the gulf coast. So that is in this bill as well.

I might mention the Secret Service, which we have to support, in addition to the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection. There is a lot in our \$40 billion bill.

Let me just make one other point. We have eliminated \$204 million of rescissions in, as I said, low-priority programs. These were eliminated to spend money on high-priority programs. We have reduced administrative funding by over \$800 million, and we have reduced the headquarters account by almost \$100 million.

I am one to shave some of this money off of administration, but I can't go much further, and I will tell you why. This department is a hard department to manage, and it can't manage itself. Secretary Napolitano must have the resources at the administrative level to

manage a department that is only 10 years old, and that brings disparate agencies together to have them function.

We have seen what happens when we don't invest in management. We have seen what happens when we gut administration. We had a weak shell of FEMA show up after Katrina and just about ruined our efforts for recovery. We are never going to see that again. So I am committed to funding the FEMA administration and to funding the Department. We can cut, and we have made some cuts, but I am telling the other side we just can't keep cutting the administration and then turn around and expect the same agencies to ferret out fraud, waste, and abuse. We need good managers to do that and so we must continue to fund them.

I am proud I was able to include \$358 million for six Coast Guard Fast Response Cutters. Those happened to be built in Louisiana—I am proud of that—but the decision was made well before I got to be chair of this committee for that construction. I am proud to have funded that effort and to give the Coast Guard the upgrade of equipment they need to do the work we are asking them to do. Their work just continues to go up. They are a very popular part of our Federal Government. I think everyone loves the Coast Guard. We are very fond of them in Louisiana because we depend on them for so many things, and I think their fleet needs to be upgraded.

Some of these ships are built in other States—some of their infrastructure is in other States—and I am proud to support the Offshore Patrol Cutter. We included \$110 million for 40 response boats; another \$129 million for maritime patrol aircraft, mission pallets, and spares; and we have \$18 million to replace a helicopter that crashed. I could recite some other things, but we have tried to do our best by the Coast Guard, to upgrade the equipment they need to help us during this time.

We have also put in this bill—and I am very proud of this, and I hope the public will see some immediate improvements—250 machines for additional advanced imaging technology. We put in funding to pay for this so that people can get through those security lines faster. We are losing a lot of money as a nation with people stuck in lines, and it is just slowing down our productivity, which is important because our businesses need people to travel.

Of course, being from a State that depends on hospitality—our Presiding Officer just recently visited Louisiana, and we are grateful to him and his family for coming to spend some time with us. We would like everyone to come and spend some time in Louisiana—Lafayette, Baton Rouge. I know the Presiding Officer had a great time and spent some time in hotels and restaurants.

New York depends a lot on tourism, as does Nevada and California, and

many other States. When people get hassled too much while traveling, they just stop going. Now, we can't drive our cars everywhere we want to go. So making flying a little easier once again for the public, yet still safe, is something I most certainly want to work on.

Just a couple more comments and then I will close.

I want to commend the group in Louisiana at our Cyber Innovation Center. They received—not out of this bill but out of the Department—a very small grant to help with the improvement on training the workforce to be the cyber warriors we need them to be. We need to do that in Delaware, we need to do that in Louisiana, we need to do that in Texas, and we need to do it everywhere.

We are not educating and producing the graduates we need to be the cyber warriors of the future. We don't want to have our warrior force—as much as we are proud to have legal immigrants in our country—outsourced to India or China or Japan, to have their Ph.D.s or masters or degreed individuals come to do this work. We want to raise our own to do this work, and we can do that. I am proud to support some of those efforts in this bill.

Unfortunately, the tight spending limits necessitated deep cuts in first responder grant programs. While we were able to provide \$354 million above the House level for such grant programs, the final agreement cuts funding by 30 percent. I believe the Federal government has a responsibility to work with and assist State and local first responders in developing their capabilities to mitigate, prevent, and respond to all disasters whether they are natural disasters or terrorist attacks.

There are also significant cuts in science and technology activities. While we were successful in mitigating the excessive cuts contained in the House bill by restoring \$129 million, the agreement reduces spending by \$160 million below fiscal year 2011 levels. I believe that the Department of Homeland Security, like any successful business, must invest in science and technology to address evolving threats and I intend to make this program a priority going forward.

To minimize these reductions, the agreement includes \$204 million of rescissions of low priority programs, reduces funding in administrative accounts by over \$800 million and reduces Departmental headquarters accounts by \$9 million. The agreement also provides for the orderly termination of the Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement and the Office of Risk Management and Analysis, programs that are either redundant or poorly executed.

During our negotiations with the House, we were able to eliminate a number of objectionable language riders, including three immigration provisions that would have limited the Department's authority to enforce our immigration laws, a provision that

would have prohibited Transportation Security Administration employees from collective bargaining, and a provision that would have required TSA to reduce thousands of screeners and transition toward a private sector work force.

I am pleased that we were able to include in the agreement provisions that will: facilitate maintaining or hiring firefighters by local fire departments; allow FEMA to waive recoupment requirements for disaster survivors who, through no fault of their own, received overpayments as much as 6 years ago; extend the National Flood Insurance Program through May 31, 2012; and extend the authorities of the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards program for 1 year. The agreement also includes a provision that gives States the flexibility to use FEMA hazard mitigation grant funding to reimburse homeowners for storm mitigation work originally completed with a Small Business Administration loan. This provision provides equity of benefits among disaster survivors.

The agreement includes funding for a number of critical investments that will enhance the department's capacity to respond to an evolving threat:

Coast Guard funding includes: \$358 million for six Fast Response Cutters; \$77 million for long lead time material for the sixth National Security Cutter; \$25 million for development and design of the Offshore Patrol Cutter; \$110 million for 40 Response Boat Mediums; \$129.5 million for two Maritime Patrol Aircraft, mission pallets, and spares; \$18.3 million to replace a helicopter that crashed in 2010; \$15.2 in response to the gulf coast oil spill, to enhance oil spill response capabilities, including 87 new positions; \$200.7 million for shore facility projects, infrastructure to support new assets, and military housing; and \$63.5 million for a new C-130J aircraft, by transfer from the Department of Defense.

Funding is included for the Transportation Security Administration for: 250 additional Advanced Imaging Technology machines with the capacity to protect people's privacy; 145 new behavior detection officers; 12 additional multi-modal Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response, VIPR, teams; 20 additional explosives detection canine teams; and 53 new positions to strengthen international air cargo security.

The agreement provides resources to Customs and Border Protection to support: 21,370 Border Patrol agents, sustaining the increased levels approved in the Fiscal Year 2010 Supplemental; 21,186 CBP officers working at the ports of entry, including 312 new officers and additional canine teams; \$5 million for officer and agent integrity programs, including polygraph testing; \$5 million to CBP to work within existing laws to increase collection of antidumping and countervailing duties and implement aggressive options to level the trade playing field for U.S. companies.

The agreement provides \$443 million for cybersecurity efforts, an increase of \$80 million above Fiscal Year 2011, of

which \$22.8 million is for cybersecurity education and awareness. The increase will continue efforts to combat the cyber threat by reducing points of access to Federal computer networks, enhancing intrusion detection through Einstein, and building a cybersecurity workforce through education and training.

So it remains the responsibility of each generation to make the necessary investments to secure our homeland. I take this responsibility seriously, and my members take it seriously as part of our Homeland Security Committee. We worked very hard to produce a good bill for the country. We are proud of this bill. It is about \$40 billion of their money. I hope they believe we are allocating it and spending it accordingly.

Mr. President, I look forward to the hearings we are going to have next year on some important topics, and I will close by wishing you and the staff and everyone here a merry Christmas and a happy and blessed holiday.

I yield the floor, and I 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. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RUBIO. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMPACTS TO THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Mr. RUBIO. It is a pleasure to be here. This will be my last speech of the year. As I said yesterday in another speech, it has been an extraordinary honor and privilege to serve in the Senate. I look forward to the next 5 years of doing that, God willing. It is a phenomenal institution and I am proud to be a part of it, even though some days make you scratch your head.

I am here on two things before we close out the year. I have a specific interest on items that impact the Western Hemisphere.

I wish to take this opportunity to say that one of the real treats of the last year is being able to work with Senator MENENDEZ on the Western Hemispheric Committee. We share a lot of views in common, and even on the ones we don't we have a very cooperative working relationship. It has been a great experience working with him on that, and I look forward to more of that next year on that committee and with everyone on Foreign Relations.

I know there are a lot of big domestic issues happening, but the things around the world matter. They matter a lot to us. I know when times are tough economically, sometimes we wonder: Why should we care what is happening halfway around the world?

We are not Luxembourg, with all due respect to Luxembourg. We are the United States of America. What that means is that virtually every aspect of our life is directly impacted by things that are happening sometimes halfway around the world.

One of the things that is always in our interest is the promotion of freedom and democracy. It is one of the things that sets us apart from other nations. Our greatest export is the American example, the fact that people look to this country and see it is possible for people to have self-government.

I know self-government and this Republic sometimes look messy from the outside looking in. As I tell people often, if you saw the way some of your food is made, you wouldn't eat it. I think sometimes when you look at the political process and the lights that shine on it, there are some things about it and the process that I don't like and you don't like. But it is still better than virtually any other form of government that has ever existed on the Earth. We are all privileged and blessed to be able to live in this Republic. Any time we have the opportunity to speak out on behalf of democracy and freedom, we should.

I had, this week, the opportunity to engage on that issue, and I wish to publicly acknowledge the work of Under Secretary Sherman, who has spent a lot of time talking to me this week about Nicaragua and about elections in Nicaragua that were, in my opinion, fraudulent and unfortunate because the rest of the hemisphere is moving toward democracy, the rest of the hemisphere is moving toward free and fair elections. In Latin America, sometimes people whom we don't agree with win elections, people who don't like us, who believe the national interests of their country are contrary to ours. But the people chose them.

Unfortunately, what happened in Nicaragua is grotesque. This person Daniel Ortega, who was a Sandinista, who was once a dictator of that country, basically has ignored the Constitution and ran for office again. There were extraordinary irregularities. The Carter Center, for example, wasn't allowed to come in and observe it. The OAS has already talked about real problems with that election and we hope to see their report soon.

Let me publicly acknowledge the time and effort the Department of State spent talking to me on the phone about ensuring that the United States is a forceful voice on behalf of democracy and freedom in Nicaragua and in the hemisphere. I appreciate their work on that behalf, and I know we are looking forward to the OAS's report fairly soon.

Senator MENENDEZ and I have filed a resolution in this institution that I hope we will pass that recognizes the need for this country to stand firmly on the side of the Nicaraguan people on behalf of freedom and democracy.

There is another topic I touched upon the other day; that is, the people-to-people travel to Cuba. I kind of went through these itineraries a couple days ago that show basically what these trips are all about is nothing more than tourism—just tourism. It is just people going to Cuba.

The reason why this is problematic is because it gives money to the Castro government.

Today in the Miami Herald is a very disturbing article. The article is from Juan Tamayo, who is a reporter who writes for the El Nuevo Herald and Miami Herald:

Cuban dissidents have sent out photos and videos of a large police crackdown in the eastern town of Palma Soriano that left at least five government opponents with head wounds, black eyes and other injuries.

One photo of the Dec. 2 roundup of 46 dissidents shows Henry Perales with two wounds on his shaved head that required nine stitches to close. Another shows AbrahamCQ Cabrera with one stitch on his forehead.

"That wound bled a lot because it was on a blood vessel, but it was a kick to the ribs on the right side that made me fall to the ground. . . . It still hurts," Cabrera told El Nuevo Herald by phone from Palma Soriano.

The images were sent to the newspaper by Luis Enrique Ferrer Garcia, U.S. representative of the dissident Cuban Patriotic Union. His brother, former political prisoner Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia, heads the Union and was one of the men arrested in the Palma Soriano crackdown.

Union members and supporters took two weeks to smuggle out the photos and the videos, via emails, because they had to work slowly and carefully to avoid police agents who were trying to find and seize the images, Luis Enrique said.

The Palma Soriano roundup was one of the largest and harshest police crackdowns on dissidents in recent years. All were freed hours or days later—one of them 12 days later—without charges.

Forty-six men had gathered in a Palma Soriano house starting on Nov. 30 with plans to stage a street protest two days later to demand the release of all political prisoners and respect for human rights.

Those sound like pretty reasonable requests to me, release of political prisoners and respect of human rights. This is what they were going to protest on behalf of.

Cell phone videos shot inside the house showed many of the dissidents saying they wanted to show they were not U.S. paid "mercenaries," as the government brands them, but rather "defenders of human rights."

The unidentified narrator of some of the videos referred to the police already deployed outside "and the repression that awaits us."

So these protesters knew what was about to happen. They have seen this before. This is what happens in Cuba when you speak out in favor of human rights and against political prisoners. You get your head cracked open. These guys knew this was going to happen, but yet they had the bravery to go forward with it.

Police indeed arrested the dissidents as they left the house in groups of four and five, and a video taken from a second-story balcony showed them punching some of the protesters and forcing them onto a U.S.-styled