

then serves as an ambassador for education throughout the State and also represents Connecticut on a national scale, working on panels and advisory committees with other State teachers of the year, as well as with the National State Teacher of the Year Program and the U.S. Department of Education. This year's Connecticut Teacher of the Year, Blaise Messenger, was selected from 4 finalists, 15 semifinalists, and over 80 district teachers of the year for this tremendous distinction.

Mr. Messenger makes an extraordinary difference in the lives of his students and their families and at his school. He is an inspiration to his colleagues. At Woodside Intermediate School in Cromwell, CT, he is well known for his commitment to making fifth grade engaging and interesting. An actor in Los Angeles and New York City for many years, Mr. Messenger dedicates this thespian acumen and ability to his students' progress. By making school fun and relevant, his students remember what he teaches and come out of his classroom as enthusiastic learners. When addressing fellow educators as Connecticut Teacher of the Year, he advised his colleagues to "think back to that teacher you can still hear in your head." I am grateful that Mr. Messenger came to Connecticut to apply his talents, high energy, and positive spirit as a community leader.

One personal inspiration for Mr. Messenger's incredible impact as a teacher is his own family—especially his two sons, Ethan and Caleb, who live with him and his wife Kimberley in Cromwell. Mr. Messenger has said that his love for them—and his witnessing how teachers impacted their lives, especially his son Ethan who has autism—drives his desire to change the lives of children.

I thank the Connecticut State Department of Education and the National Teacher of the Year Program for representing the voices of passionate, talented teachers and recognizing their heroic efforts. Mr. Messenger has already done great work on a national level, sparking important discussions about changing the way we educate our future generations. I am very proud that he represents Connecticut as 2013 Teacher of the Year and invite my colleagues to join me in applauding his invaluable contributions to our country.

SYRIA

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I wish to speak about the crisis in Syria and the role that one company in one nation is playing in perpetuating the strife.

Every day Syria descends deeper into chaos and civil war. Since March 2011, more than 100,000 Syrians have been killed, an estimated 5 million have been internally displaced, and at least 1.6 million have fled their war-torn land. By the end of 2013, half of Syria's population may have left their homes.

The pressure on neighboring countries, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, is only increasing. Beyond the refugee crisis, the resulting chaos threatens unprecedented violence and instability for all of Syria's neighbors. As Syria's conflict grows increasingly radical, its borders are increasingly insecure.

In August 2011, now nearly 2 years ago, President Obama declared that Syria's dictator, Bashar Asad, had lost all legitimacy and "must go." At the time of that statement, the number of Syrians butchered by the Asad regime numbered a then-shocking 6,000. There were frequent grim comparisons to Bashar al-Asad's father Hafez, who shelled Hama for days in 1982, killing perhaps 20,000. Now, today we see a nation on a path to destruction and Hafez Asad's 20,000 dead is just a fraction of the number his son has killed.

America must take seriously its commitment to doing what it can to bring an end to the Asad regime. We must not tolerate the empowerment of forces antithetical to our interests. And we certainly must not be complicit in their behavior.

The triumph of the Asad regime would validate and encourage the murderous behavior of leaders who spurn democracy and the rule of law. It would empower the belligerent regime in Tehran and offer support to Iranian proxies who seek to annihilate Israel and ultimately threaten our own nation.

While we view the Asad regime with rebellion, some others have stepped up support for him, facilitating Asad's brutal success. Among these is the Government of Russia. Russia has demonstrated time and again its support for Bashar Asad and its opposition to our own humanitarian and democratic values.

Russia has consistently thwarted multilateral efforts to stem the violence in Syria, including vetoing a United Nations Security Council resolution that would have penalized Asad's failure to carry out a peace plan. It has made clear its unwavering support for Asad's brutality. Addressing the compounding challenges posed by Russian intransience has proven increasingly difficult. The Obama administration has made a serious effort to engage in a direct dialog over matters related to Syria, most recently along the sidelines of the G8.

But that effort has not been fruitful. Indeed, the Russian Government has demonstrated no genuine interest in achieving a resolution to the Syria conflict. Moscow appears to simply enjoy the political cover that U.S.-Russian talks provide. Russia remains unwavering in its support for an Asad regime that has hosted its bases, served Russian economic interests, and anchored what remains of Russia's influence in the region.

At the same time, Moscow continues to flout international norms. Russia is acting antagonistically toward our Na-

tion. It perpetuates human rights abuses at home. It sacrifices the well-being of Russia's orphans for the sake of political gains. And it is sheltering the fugitive Edward Snowden.

Russia's state-owned arms export firm, Rosoboronexport, has exacerbated the crisis in Syria. Instead of promoting a path to peace, Rosoboronexport has provided the Syrian Government with the means to perpetrate widespread and systemic attacks on its own people. It has supplied Asad with guns, grenades, tank parts, attack aircraft, anti-ship cruise missiles, and air defense missiles, which his regime in turn uses to perpetuate its rule and murder innocent civilians. Rosoboronexport also has made a commitment to provide Syria with S-300 advanced anti-aircraft missiles that would protect Syrian air dominance and facilitate its continued attacks on its civilian population.

These weapons do not threaten the Syrian people alone. They challenge American interests in the region, including the safety and security of Israel.

Let's look at one particular example that has received a good deal of international attention. It is certainly possible that NATO or our own Nation may decide it is necessary to create a no-fly zone over Syria to stop the carnage. Russian-provided S-300s would present a major threat to U.S. or allied aircraft and pilots seeking to establish such a zone. They would also pose a direct threat to Israeli civil and military air traffic.

The Russian transfer of weapons to Syria is not just inhumane, but it is a violation of U.S. law. The Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 and the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Accountability Act, as well as Executive Orders 13382 and 13582 all demand sanctions against "those entities that materially assist, or provide support for, the Government of Syria."

In addition, the fiscal year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act prohibits contracts with Rosoboronexport, and section 1233 of S. 1197, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, which was passed by the Senate Armed Services Committee, prohibits the use of funds to enter contracts with Rosoboronexport.

In light of the lack of progress of diplomatic efforts to end Russian support for the Asad regime and the direct nature of the threat these escalating arms sales pose, it is incumbent upon the U.S. Government to pursue more aggressive measures as mandated by U.S. law to create incentives for the Russians to change their behavior. Indeed, Senator KELLY AYOTTE and I have written to the President urging that he take this course.

With the exception of particular circumstances of true military necessity, the administration must end all financial dealings with Rosoboronexport and begin to impose sanctions against Rosoboronexport.

We must also impose sanctions against any Russian manufacturers that provide military equipment such as advanced anti-aircraft systems to Syria in contravention of U.S. law.

In my view, it is unconscionable for us to provide Russia with the recently announced \$550 million contract for 30 additional Mi-17 helicopters, a purchase the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has strongly advised against.

American taxpayer dollars should not be provided to a Russian state-owned corporation that is complicit in the murder of tens of thousands of innocent Syrian men, women, and children. The Department of Defense has the authority to end this contract with Rosoboronexport, which fails to meet the requirements of the Afghan military, and I have joined many of my colleagues in urging the administration to review this sale.

The United States must not be complicit in the arming of the Asad regime nor in the empowerment of countries like Iran, which will triumph if Asad succeeds. I urge the administration to impose sanctions on Rosoboronexport and to demonstrate to Russia that its behavior in Syria will not be cost-free in its relations with our Nation.

REMEMBERING PETER SORBO

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, today I wish to honor the service of Mr. Peter Sorbo, of Connecticut, whose family resides in Waterbury, CT. In January 1943, 18 year-old Peter Sorbo enlisted in the Army to serve his country during World War II. Deployed to the European theater and assigned to Bombardment Group 384, Squadron 545, he served as a waist gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress and perished on August 12, 1943 after his plane was shot down above the Rhine.

I would like to have printed in the RECORD an article from the Waterbury Republican American that outlines this fascinating story about one of Connecticut's brave soldiers.

Many of Connecticut's sons, like Peter Sorbo, gave their lives defending our freedom and they deserve our perpetual gratitude. I ask that this body devote itself to remembering these courageous men and women by honoring their sacrifices and forever preserving their memories.

The following article written by Mike Patrick appeared in the July 29, 2013 edition of the Waterbury Republican-American. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

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

THE TRUTH . . . FINALLY

IT TOOK DECADES, BUT WATERBURY SISTERS LEARN ABOUT THEIR BROTHER'S DEATH IN WORLD WAR II

WATERBURY.—A family friend, some Internet research and the handwritten notes of

prisoners of war have unearthed a story of tragic heroism that after seven decades has at last brought closure for two Waterbury sisters whose brother died in World War II.

"He was a good kid, a really good boy," Marie Debiase said through tears. "After 70 years, we're finally finding out what happened to him."

All she knew all these years, she said, was that her brother, Peter Sorbo, died when his plane was shot down over the Rhine in 1943.

But recently, her sister Joann Devino met Carmen Mancuso, one of their brother's old friends, at church. Mancuso said his son Richard was pretty handy at Internet research and may be able to learn a little more about the circumstances of Sorbo's death.

The sisters gave them some of their brother's letters and other documents, and Richard Mancuso, a sales manager from Madison and self-described history buff, got to work. "I read a few of them it struck my interest," he said. "I started Googling it."

Mancuso discovered a treasure trove of information, including reports of Sorbo's death written by the men who served with him that day.

The following story was pieced together from those reports, and from family recollections.

Peter Sorbo was working in the United Cigar store late in 1942 when a woman came in and chided him with something like, "What are you doing working here when my son is overseas?"

The tall, quiet 17-year-old took it to heart. He quit school, to the consternation of his parents, and enlisted in January 1943.

"I remember every bit of that day he went into the Army," Debiase said. "It was a terrible blizzard that day."

For the next several months, he wrote his family letters from the European Theater, mostly general, mundane greetings. Those letters would later prove helpful to Mancuso in learning how he died.

In August that same year, the waist gunner on a recently formed B-17 Flying Fortress squadron went AWOL. Sorbo, by then a staff sergeant, was assigned to take his place on a bombing mission over a synthetic fuel plant in Germany.

It was an extremely dangerous operation. B-17s were large, obvious and difficult for their gunners to defend. That was especially so for waist gunners, who endured sub-zero temperatures and thin oxygen while shooting Axis fighter planes through a very small window into a powerful airstream that made it hard to lock onto a target.

The plane was hit by a 20-mm shell that caught Sorbo in the neck.

The plane started to go down under continuous enemy fire. The crew prepared to bail out. One tried desperately to get a parachute onto Sorbo, who was already dying from his neck wound.

Then the plane exploded.

Six airmen parachuted out, including one who said the blast blew him out of the craft, and another who said he saw the plane go down as he drifted into the Rhine.

All six survivors were captured by the Nazis. Sorbo and three others were killed, including the crewman who tried to save him. Devino said she often thinks of that heroic airman.

"I thought of the family," she said. "If he didn't stop to try and get a parachute on Peter, he might have just been a POW."

The family didn't know any of this for decades.

After the plane was shot down, the military sent a letter saying Sorbo was missing in action.

"All those years, we were hoping maybe he was a prisoner, maybe he would get back," Debiase said. "My mother never stopped hoping."

It wasn't until the war was over that the government acknowledged the plane and Sorbo's remains had been found, and asked the family if it would like them to be returned for burial.

Debiase said her family doubted from the beginning that the remains were his, but figured it was a service member who needed burial anyway, so they accepted them.

"Who we got, I don't know, but we respect it as my brother," Debiase said. "We visit the cemetery and put the flags on when they need to be put on."

Sorbo's loss devastated his family. His father was so distraught that he walked off a 20-year job as a tool setter at Chase Brass & Copper.

"He couldn't handle it," Devino said.

The parents doted on and spoiled their remaining son. He ended up drafted into the Korean War, returned an alcoholic, and died young.

Debiase and her husband, Michael, live in a lovely house with a dining room table long enough to accommodate their many family gatherings.

Her brother Peter, she said, wanted to go into radio. He was funny and kind and protective—all the things an eldest brother should be to his siblings.

"We at least know what really happened," she said. "We never knew. I'm glad my parents never really knew."

Her memories of Peter, she said, she has "stored away in my heart" since she was 9, the age she was when he died. She's 79 now and Devino is 83.

Debiase looked over at that dining room table, on this day strewn with Sorbo's sepia-toned service photographs.

"Every holiday you sit down and say, 'There should be another chair,'" she said. "But there isn't."

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

SANDWICH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

● Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, today I wish to honor Sandwich, NH—a town in Carroll County that is celebrating the 250th anniversary of its founding. I am proud to join citizens across the Granite State in recognizing this historic event.

Sandwich is a picturesque community situated in the shadow of the Sandwich Dome, that has through the hard work and dedication of its citizens retained the look and feel of a traditional colonial New Hampshire village.

Sandwich was granted a charter by Governor Benning Wentworth on October 25, 1763, and derives its name from John Montague, the 4th Earl of Sandwich. Today, the population has grown to include over 1,300 residents.

Carpenters, wheelwrights, and blacksmiths formed the base of Sandwich's vibrant artisan history. The beauty of the region, and its rich history, has attracted a variety of artists to Sandwich.

In 1920, Sandwich Home Industries was founded. Today it is known statewide as the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen.

Sandwich is also home to one of New Hampshire's premier agricultural fairs. Held every year on Columbus Day weekend, the Sandwich Fair has been providing a venue for the celebration of