

serve today in the Armed Forces of the United States. This past weekend, on Armed Forces Day, I had the honor of participating in the grand opening of the Military Family Support Center presented by the Cobb Chamber of Commerce. It remains humbling to me every time I see Georgia communities come together to support our servicemen and servicewomen and their families.

Anyone who opens a newspaper today or turns on the TV knows that we live in a world of unknown and dangerous threats. Despite this, nearly 2.1 million Americans have voluntarily raised their right hands and sworn to defend our Nation against all enemies, foreign and domestic. What makes these men and women unique is that, despite these global threats, they choose to rise to the challenge. They come from all walks of life. From coast to coast, every Main Street, farm, or even next door, our selfless warriors voluntarily walk away from the comforts of home to join the most elite force on this planet. They endure long hours in the field, countless months away from their families while downrange, and some even come face to face with those who wish to do us harm. These courageous Americans are deployed in more than 150 countries around the world. From humanitarian missions to coalition force partnerships to counterterrorism operations, there is no mission, no challenge they cannot rise to meet.

Our world is becoming increasingly unstable. With threats rising from old foes to new ones in familiar places, there is simply no shortage of challenges our country faces in terms of national security. While the unknown threatens global peace, one constant known is the courage and dedication of America's Armed Forces. I am constantly reminded that we are the land of the free because of the brave.

Now, this coming Monday gives us all a moment to stop and pay respect to the approximately 1.3 million Americans who have given their lives in the defense of our great Nation. From the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, from World War I to World War II, from Korea to Vietnam, and from Iraq to Afghanistan, brave men and women have answered the call to defend our homeland and protect the helpless around the world in the name of peace. Those of us who are fortunate to work in this grand Capitol Building need not look any farther than across the river, on the other side of the National Mall, where the "gardens of stone" at Arlington National Cemetery offer a sobering reminder of the price of freedom.

While Americans enjoy the long weekend with family and barbecues, I would encourage everyone to take a moment to remember the true meaning of the holiday: to honor the servicemembers who have paid the ultimate price.

I also want to take a moment to honor and thank those families who

President Lincoln once said "have laid such a costly sacrifice upon the altar of freedom." The strength of these families to persevere is like no other, and their support to our goals of peace and freedom is simply humbling.

Memorial Day—and every day—I am again honored and reminded that we are the land of the free because of the brave.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, Americans live free, secure, and stable lives thanks to generations of men and women in uniform who were willing to sacrifice their own lives. We must never forget the tremendous debt we owe those brave Americans. It is in large part because of them that America serves as a beacon of hope, freedom, and equality to all the world.

This Monday, we will celebrate Memorial Day, a national day of solemn remembrance and gratitude as we honor the men and women who have died defending our Nation. We honor each and every American who has made the ultimate sacrifice on battlefields from Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill to Fort McHenry; from Shiloh, Antietam, and Gettysburg to Belleau Wood and the Somme; from Pearl Harbor, Bastogne, and Iwo Jima to Inchon, Bloody Ridge, and the Chosin Reservoir; from Ia Drang, Khe Sanh, and Hamburger Hill to Umm Qasr, Nasiriyah, Fallujah, and Kabul. We salute the centuries-old legacy of selflessness and sacrifice that defines our Nation. We are forever indebted to our warfighters and their families. On Memorial Day, we pause to reflect, to remember, to pay respect, to give thanks. And we say a prayer for all the men and women currently serving in harm's way and look forward to the day when they may return home safely to be with their families and friends.

Memorial Day is not only a day for looking backward. It is also a day for looking forward. Those men and women who lie buried gave their lives so that we could live in peace. Their dream and the dream of every American serving in the field of battle is that someday no more Americans will be called upon to give their lives for their country, that someday war will end and the world will be truly free. What better way, then, to honor their memory than to do everything we can to seek peace?

On this day of remembrance, I hope that all Americans remember the dream of those who committed the greatest sacrifice and pursue peace in all our endeavors. As President Lincoln put it so eloquently nearly 153 years ago, let us dedicate ourselves "to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, on June 3, 1976, U.S. President Gerald Ford signed into law a bill establishing the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, more commonly known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

I bring this 40th anniversary next week to my colleagues' attention today because the commission has played a particularly significant role in U.S. foreign policy.

First, the commission provided the U.S. Congress with a direct role in the policymaking process. Members and staff of the commission have been integrated into official U.S. delegations to meetings and conferences of what is historically known as the Helsinki Process. The Helsinki Process started as an ongoing multilateral conference on security and cooperation in Europe that is manifested today in the 57-country, Vienna-based Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE.

As elected officials, our ideas reflecting the interests of concerned American citizens are better represented in U.S. diplomacy as a result of the commission. There is no other country that has a comparable body, reflecting the singular role of our legislature as a separate branch of government in the conduct of foreign policy. The commission's long-term commitment to this effort has resulted in a valuable institutional memory and expertise in European policy possessed by few others in the U.S. foreign affairs community.

Second, the commission was part of a larger effort since the late 1970s to enhance consideration of human rights as an element in U.S. foreign policy decisionmaking. Representatives Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey and Dante Fascell of Florida created the commission as a vehicle to ensure that human rights violations raised by dissident groups in the Soviet Union and the Communist countries of Eastern Europe were no longer ignored in U.S. policy.

In keeping with the Helsinki Final Act's comprehensive definition of security—which includes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as a principle guiding relations between states—we have reviewed the records of all participating countries, including our own and those of our friends and allies.

From its Cold War origins, the Helsinki Commission adapted well to changing circumstances, new challenges, and new opportunities. It has done much to ensure U.S. support for democratic development in East-Central Europe and continues to push for greater respect for human rights in Russia and the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The Commission has participated in the debates of the 1990s on how the United States should respond to conflicts in the Balkans, particularly Bosnia and Kosovo and elsewhere, and it

does the same today in regard to Russia's aggression towards Ukraine. It has pushed U.S. policy to take action to combat trafficking in persons, anti-Semitism and racism, and intolerance and corruption, as well as other problems which are not confined to one country's borders.

The Helsinki Commission has succeeded in large part due to its leadership. From the House, the commission has been chaired by Representatives Dante Fascell of Florida, my good friend STENY HOYER of Maryland, the current chairman, CHRISTOPHER SMITH of New Jersey, and ALCEE HASTINGS of Florida. From this Chamber, we have had Senators Alfonse D'Amato of New York, Dennis DeConcini of Arizona, Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado, Sam Brownback of Kansas and today's cochairman, ROGER WICKER of Mississippi.

I had the honor, myself, to chair the Helsinki Commission from 2007 to 2015. That time, and all my service on the commission, from 1993 to the present, has been enormously rewarding.

I think it is important to mention that the hard work we do on the Helsinki Commission is not a job requirement for a Member of Congress.

Rather than being a responsibility, it is something many of us choose to do because it is rewarding to secure the release of a longtime political prisoner, to reunify a family, to observe elections in a country eager to learn the meaning of democracy for the first time, to enable individuals to worship in accordance with their faiths, to know that policies we advocated have meant increased freedom for millions of individuals in numerous countries, and to present the United States as a force for positive change in this world.

Several of us have gone beyond our responsibilities on the commission to participate in the leadership of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Representative HASTINGS served for 2 years as assembly president, while Representative HOYER, Representative ROBERT ADERHOLT of Alabama, and I have served as vice presidents. Senator WICKER currently serves as chairman of the assembly's security committee.

Representative Hilda Solis of California had served as a committee chair and special representative on the critical issue of migration. Today, Representative SMITH serves as a special representative on similarly critical issue of human trafficking, while I serve as special representative on anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance.

Our engagement in this activity as elected Members of Congress reflects the deep, genuine commitment of our country to security and cooperation in Europe, and this rebounds to the enormous benefit of our country. Our friends and allies appreciate our engagement, and those with whom we have a more adversarial relationship are kept in check by our engagement. I hope my colleagues would consider this point today, especially during a time

when foreign travel is not strongly encouraged and sometimes actively discouraged.

Finally, let me say a few words about the Helsinki Commission staff, both past and present. The staff represents an enormous pool of talent. They have a combination of diplomatic skills, regional expertise, and foreign language capacity that has allowed the Members of Congress serving on the commission to be so successful. Many of them deserve mention here, but I must mention Spencer Oliver, the first chief of staff, who set the commission's precedents from the very start. Spencer went on to create almost an equivalent of the commission at the international level with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

One of his early hires and an eventual successor was Sam Wise, whom I would consider to be one of the diplomatic heroes of the Cold War period for his contributions and leadership in the Helsinki Process.

In closing, I again want to express my hope that my colleagues will consider the value of the Helsinki Commission's work over the years, enhancing the congressional role in U.S. foreign policy and advocating for human rights as part of that policy.

Indeed, the commission, like the Helsinki Process, has been considered a model that could be duplicated to handle challenges in other regions of the world. I also hope to see my colleagues increase their participation on Helsinki Commission delegations to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as well as at Helsinki Commission hearings. For as much as the commission has accomplished in its four decades, there continues to be work to be done in its fifth, and the challenges ahead are no less than those of the past.

JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and celebrate the month of May as Jewish American Heritage Month. Since the founding of our Nation, Jewish Americans have indelibly shaped American society. As a proud Jewish American, I am honored to have the opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of our vibrant community in the past, present, and future.

In the 109th Congress, Representative DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and then-Senator Arlen Specter authored a concurrent resolution calling for a proclamation each year to observe American Jewish History Month. On April 20, 2006, President George W. Bush proclaimed that May 2006 would be Jewish American Heritage Month.

Jewish Americans have fought tirelessly to realize the American Dream and to enrich our society. Jewish Americans have been instrumental in eliminating disease such as the polio epidemic, and they have split the atom. These achievements and others too nu-

merous to count are watershed moments in history, and they make up only a small fraction of the various accomplishments Jewish Americans have made.

Such achievements, however, do not come without concomitant struggles. Jewish Americans have been dedicated to promoting tolerance and understanding because Jewish people have been challenged and persecuted throughout history whenever they have professed their faith. Jewish Americans participated in the abolitionist movement in the 19th century and joined the ranks of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. There is no question that the Jewish tradition of diversity and inclusion has helped to make the United States the force for equal rights, democracy, and opportunity that it is today. Though we face challenges to that ideal every day, we must not forget that this country was and remains a beacon for those suffering under the weight of oppression around the world.

We cannot underestimate the role that Israel plays in Jewish American society and in the lives of Jewish people around the world. Our homeland is the focal point of our religion and our culture. Further, our two nations are built on a common set of core democratic principles and representative government, but we have more than political philosophies in common; we share a strong belief in the promotion of equality, freedom, and tolerance. The United States will always stand by Israel, and we will always support the safety of the Israeli people. As a U.S. Senator, I have been proud to take part in efforts to strengthen the relationship between our two nations. Without our homeland, Jewish Americans may never have been able to make the myriad contributions they have made to our Nation. These Jewish Americans' accomplishments embody the positive values that form the foundation of our shared culture and history. Our diversity makes the United States of America strong, and Jewish Americans have played an integral role in shaping and nurturing that diversity.

THE MALMEDY MASSACRE

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the sacrifice of our soldiers at the Malmedy massacre.

As we prepare for Memorial Day, it is important to remember the 87 Americans who were killed in action during the Malmedy massacre and honor the brave few who survived this terrible ordeal. One of the survivors of this massacre, Harold W. Billow, is a proud resident of Pennsylvania.

On December 17, 1944, Mr. Billow and Battery B, 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion were riding in a convoy of vehicles towards the Belgian town of St. Vith. The convoy was attacked outside of Malmedy by a Nazi SS unit called Kampfgruppe Peiper.