

Some armed groups have targeted United Nations peacekeepers, a potential war crime under international law. On April 3, members of “anti-Balaka” militias attacked a United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA, base, killing 1 peacekeeper and injuring 11 others. On April 8, MINUSCA troops came under fire as they were conducting a joint operation with CAR state security forces aimed at disarming and detaining the leaders of what they referred to as criminal groups in Bangui’s last remaining Muslim enclave, the PK5 neighborhood. Two days later, armed groups levied a sustained attack against a MINUSCA base in downtown Bangui, resulting in the death of one peacekeeper.

The resurgence of militia violence has made CAR one of the most dangerous countries in the world for humanitarian workers, leading aid agencies to reconsider their operations there. Six aid workers were killed in February this year alone, and attacks and threats continue. In November 2017, Doctors Without Borders shut down a major operation after a string of attacks and threats.

Some may ask why the United States should care about what happens in a small landlocked country in Africa with a population of just under 5 million. I give you three reasons.

First, as members of the community of nations, we have a moral obligation to take action when we see mass violence and human suffering. United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O’Brien warned in August 2017 that the renewed clashes were early warning signs of a possible move towards genocide. While thankfully that scenario has not unfolded, violence continues to play out along ethnic and sectarian lines, causing social profound cleavages. Armed groups of various stripes carry out atrocities, including widespread sexual violence, against innocent civilians. In 2014, largely Christian anti-Balaka militia groups, waged a systematic campaign in 2014 forcing most of CAR’s Muslim citizens to flee their homes. Many of those Muslim communities remain largely confined to the rebel stronghold of the northeast and small enclaves in the capitol and other population centers. We must do our part to bring this kind of horrific violence to an end. History offers brutal reminders of what happens when the international community fails to intervene on behalf of persecuted minorities.

We must continue to help those in need. The number of internally displaced persons in CAR has increased by more than 70 percent over the past year. Of an estimated total population of 4 million, approximately 681,000 Central Africans are internally displaced—the highest number reported since the height of the conflict in early 2014—while an estimated 568,000 more are sheltering as refugees in neighboring

countries. Over 87,000 children are at risk of acute malnutrition. Yet the U.N. has received only 5 percent of the \$515.6 million it has requested for its 2018 humanitarian response plan. The World Food Program was forced to cut rations in half for the most vulnerable families nearly a year ago, due to lack of funding. Earlier this year, U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ursula Mueller stated unequivocally: “If we do not receive funding, people will die.”

Second, lack of stability in CAR has implications for broader regional instability. CAR is located in a volatile and impoverished region with a long history of development, governance, and human rights problems. Violence in CAR only adds to the enormous human suffering in neighboring countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. Other countries bordering CAR continue to struggle against the Boko Haram insurgency. We know that instability throughout the world can directly impact U.S. interests. It is in our interests to promote stability and peace throughout the region.

Third, the U.S. has invested \$1 billion in CAR in the past 2 years; promoting lasting stability and governance is the surest way for our investments to yield positive results. Our Permanent Representative to the U.N., Ambassador Nikki Haley, has spent considerable time focusing on cutting peacekeeping costs, and the administration has signaled its desire to limit funding for U.N. peacekeeping missions. However, it has spent precious little time investing in diplomatic strategies and initiatives to end the conflicts that have necessitated these missions and would support their success. Doing so would be more cost effective, as well as having a positive impact on those impacted by conflict.

The situation is dire. In the absence of action by the administration, along with our partners in the international community, the risk of the CAR fully collapsing is high, but while it might be difficult to turn back the increasing tide of violence facing the country, it is not impossible. I urge the administration to take the following steps: fully staff senior leadership positions at the Department of State and USAID. It is well past time for this administration to put our foreign policy house in order to best advance American interests. The administration has not nominated an ambassador to CAR, leaving the post vacant for over 6 months. It also has not nominated an Assistant Secretary of State for Africa to coordinate policy and engage with counterparts in the region and among our partners in Europe and elsewhere. There is no Assistant Administrator for Africa at USAID at a time of unprecedented humanitarian needs on the continent. We need high-ranking diplomats and aid officials to bring fresh ideas and energy into policy discus-

sions in Washington and galvanize action in capitols of other countries. Quickly filling vacancies is an easily accomplished task that would have a significant impact; formulate an updated strategy for CAR. Fully staffed or not, given the situation on the ground, the administration must act. Three years ago, the Obama administration put forward such a strategy in response to legislation. This administration should follow up and respond to changing conditions on the ground by putting in place a multiyear, comprehensive strategy to support greater peace and stability in CAR as a foundation for future development and prosperity. Such a plan should include humanitarian and development goals in addition to plans for diplomatic actions and engagement; work with other donors and the United Nations to incentivize greater progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and security sector reform. The 2015 “Bangui Forum” called for all combatants to give up their weapons prior to national elections in 2016. This process was never undertaken. A renewed effort a year ago has yet to yield significant results. We must continue support for rule of law and accountability. Financial and diplomatic support for CAR’s nascent special criminal court is also critical to fulfilling this process.

Finally, we must signal our intention to follow through with commitments to the people of CAR and to our international partners by sending a high-level delegation from Washington to CAR and inviting President Touadera to the United States for an official visit.

None of the policy recommendations I am suggesting are particularly difficult. All it takes is time, attention, and, to be frank, an interest in being involved to devise a strategy and determine how to adequately fund it. I urge the administration not to let a tragedy occur due to indifference.

#### RECOGNIZING CLEAR SPRINGS FOODS, INC.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, today, along with my colleague Senator MIKE CRAPO, I wish to recognize fellow Idahoan Larry Cope who retired from Clear Springs Foods, Inc., in Buhl, ID, in March of this year. Larry, who is president and CEO of the company, has had an exemplary career as a visionary and selfless leader at Clear Springs for the past 45 years. He deserves to retire.

Idaho is very proud to be home to the headquarters of Clear Springs Foods, the world’s largest producer of aquacultured rainbow trout, supplying restaurants and major supermarkets throughout the United States and propelling fish farming well beyond our borders. Larry would tell us it has taken a great team to lead this originally privately owned small business into the immensely successful 100-percent employee-owned operation it is

today, but we know it was with Larry's cutting-edge leadership and distinguished commitment to the business that it has grown into such a global industry.

In 1973, with just \$10,000—money critical to the company at the time—and a true spirit of recognizing the value of good workers, Larry created an employee retirement plan and stayed committed to the plan. Today the retirement fund is more than \$60 million. Larry believes in taking care of his workers, many of whom go in every day to do difficult, routine work. Larry exhibits the type of leader every industry needs: focused while looking ahead, kind, fair, and employee friendly. No one has to tell him to serve in this manner; it is who he is, and he does it with a spring in his step.

MIKE and I have known Larry since the days Clear Springs had an annual production of 450,000 pounds of trout. Now, the company produces 24 million pounds every year, making it an exemplary industry leader.

Larry has been immensely valuable to the aquaculture industry worldwide. He has been in many leadership roles in business associations and boards, and he has won many awards. To name a few of his roles in the food industry and beyond, Larry has served as a board member and chairman of the National Fisheries Institute, the American Frozen Food Institute, the Idaho Association of Commerce & Industry, as well as St. Luke's Health System. In addition, he has served as a trustee at the College of Idaho, his alma mater.

Another important character quality Larry exhibits is believing in serving his community. He is a pillar of support and encouragement to the region, having helped bring St. Luke's Hospital into the Magic Valley, as well as supporting the growth of the region's food production industry. As food production grows, so does the number of jobs and residual businesses. This is good growth for Idaho.

MIKE and I are proud to recognize Larry Cope, our good friend and a strong, courageous, and dedicated leader in Idaho. As I said a minute ago, Larry has done so much in business and community service for more than 45 years that he has earned his retirement.

Larry, kick up your feet and go fishing.

Thank you.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO CAROLYN LUMSDEN

• Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Carolyn Lumsden, who received the Sigma Delta Chi Award from the Society of Professional Journalists.

Ms. Lumsden, an opinion editor for the Hartford Courant, wrote an editorial series last year which revealed the breadth of the crumbling concrete

foundations issue in northeastern Connecticut. Her work, "Crumbling Foundations," gave a thorough look at this tragic situation where hundreds, potentially tens of thousands, of homes have foundations that need to be replaced because the concrete contains an iron sulfide that ultimately weakens the structure. Through her months of research, Ms. Lumsden spoke with homeowners, engineers, geologists, data analysts, bankers, and lawyers to understand the complete scope of this problem.

"Crumbling Foundations" initiated much-needed, positive progress for the people of Connecticut, thanks in part to the data and personal testimonies Ms. Lumsden gathered. In the months following the series' publishing, the Internal Revenue Service approved tax breaks for homeowners, and the State of Connecticut approved \$100 million in bonding over 5 years to help the homeowners suffering from crumbling foundations. I am working, along with my congressional delegation colleagues, on additional Federal relief to homeowners and funding for research into pyrrhotite.

Ms. Lumsden's dedication to using her position as a journalist to assist the people of Connecticut is deeply admirable. For over 200 years, the American press has uncovered and reported vital information to the public about our communities. Thanks to "Crumbling Foundations," our State is now acutely aware of this significant tragedy and is working actively to find a solution.

I applaud her tireless efforts to uncover the truth of this problem and hope my colleagues will join me in congratulating Ms. Lumsden on her well-earned honor.●

##### TRIBUTE TO WAYNE HAVER

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate Mr. Wayne Haver, principal of Southside High School in Fort Smith, AR. Mr. Haver will retire at the end of this school year after 48 years of service to Fort Smith Public Schools.

Having started as a teacher at Southside in 1970, Mr. Haver has had a long, distinguished career as an educator and administrator. He became an assistant principal at the school in 1974 and, in 1982 was named principal and has served in that role ever since.

Enrollment at Southside now stands at over 1,500 students, and the community has witnessed how much the school has changed and grown under Mr. Haver's guidance. Thousands of students have graduated from the school during his tenure.

As principal for more than 35 years, some of those graduates have returned as teachers and now work alongside an educator who served as a mentor both while they were students and now as instructors. Southside has also been recognized three times as a School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of

Education, a testament to Mr. Haver's leadership.

In 2013, Mr. Haver was named Administrator of the Year by the National Association of Education Office Professionals. At the time, he was only the second Arkansas educator to have received the award.

Upon his retirement, Principal Haver will be leaving an incredible legacy of education and service to his community. He is only the second principal Southside High School has ever had in its 55-year history. He has spent his career devoted to education, seldom missing a day of work. He is admired by his staff, who say he is an incredible man to work for and will be greatly missed.

His musical ability has been cherished by students and faculty alike and will be remembered fondly after he retires. He learned to play the school's fight song on his harmonica, and his performances became a fixture at pep rallies and other school events.

I congratulate Wayne Haver on a remarkable career and admire his dedication to the students and families of Fort Smith and Southside High School. As a native of Fort Smith, I am incredibly proud of everything he has accomplished. His dedication and professionalism have certainly helped to make the community a better place to live. I wish him all the best in retirement and thank him for his countless contributions to Southside High School.●

##### RECOGNIZING ANFINSON FARM STORE

• Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I wish to recognize Anfinson Farm Store, a small business in Cushing, IA, that has been a staple of the community for 100 years.

Like many businesses, Anfinson Farm Store will be receiving significant tax relief from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and they are using this as an opportunity to invest in their most important resource: their employees. After the legislation was signed into law, owner John Anfinson, who has owned the business for 46 years, announced that all seven of their full-time employees would receive \$1,000 bonuses and 5-percent pay increases. He was also able to purchase nearly \$400,000 in new equipment with 1-year expensing.

Small businesses make up 97 percent of employers in Iowa, and prior to the passage of tax reform, they were taxed at marginal rates that often reached as high as 45 percent. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is a monumental achievement for small businesses, reducing their tax burden so that they can grow and invest in their employees.

As we celebrate National Small Business Week, I would like to recognize Anfinson Farm Store and all of Iowa's small businesses, who are the backbone of our economy. I would also like to express my gratitude to the President