

the Commonwealth, even as she deals with unimaginable adversity. Given her absolute devotion to her family, it can be no surprise what anguish she must feel now knowing that her own son faces an uncertain, and possibly deadly, future in a Russian penal colony.

As public servants, we have a solemn duty to address the root cause of Malphine's adversity, to advocate for the release of Malphine's son Marc. We must approach the task of bringing Marc safely home with the same commitment, consistency, and patience that Malphine has lived the last 95 years—for Marc does not deserve the 14 years at a remote Russian penal colony which the Russian court leveled on him.

In August 2021, Marc chose to return for a final year of teaching at the Anglo-American School in Moscow, after 9 years at that school and a 35-year career as an international educator. Yes, Marc made a mistake. Russia has not come to accept marijuana as a medical treatment as in the United States. And yes, according to the Russian penal code, Marc's possession of less than an ounce of marijuana warrants a short prison sentence, the same sentence leveled on Russian citizens who have committed similar offenses. But no, justice does not allow, much less require, Marc to spend his sixties and almost half of his seventies in a remote Russian penal colony. Clearly, Marc's 14-year sentence is a bargaining chip for Putin against the United States.

No family deserves to be torn apart, much less Malphine's family. That is why I call on the President to continue to do everything in his power to give Malphine the chance to see her son again. Today, we honor and celebrate Malphine, but we also must recommit to bringing Marc home.

RUSSIA

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, an article in the February 29 New York Times, entitled "5 Convicts Familiar With Navalny's Prison Confirm Hellish Conditions," describes the horrifyingly cruel treatment of political prisoners in Russia. Anyone who reads the article could easily mistakenly assume that they were reading about the shocking ways that prisoners were dehumanized, brutalized, starved, and murdered in the Middle Ages, except this is 2024.

What the article describes is not new, but it has received renewed attention since the murder, on February 16, of Aleksei Navalny, who bravely challenged Putin's corrupt and ruthless crusade to destroy any semblance of democracy and freedom in Russia today.

I want to quote a few passages from the article for the benefit of those who have not read it:

Locked in an Arctic prison, Aleksei A. Navalny is likely to have spent his final days

in some of the most inhumane conditions within Russia's extensive penitentiary system, according to five men who have served sentences in the same penal colony as the Russian opposition leader.

The men described in phone interviews unbearable cold, repulsive food, unsanitary conditions, and beatings in Penal Colony No. 3 of the remote Yamalo-Nenets region, where Mr. Navalny arrived in December to serve out the remainder of his 19-year prison sentence. The former inmates said the conditions were especially brutal in the solitary cells where Mr. Navalny is believed to have been confined on the day he was pronounced dead.

But what made the prison, known as IK-3 or the Troika, dreaded even by Russia's hardened inmates was the exceptional psychological pressure and loneliness, they said. It was a system devised to break the human spirit, by making survival depend on total and unconditional obedience to the will of guards.

"It was complete and utter annihilation," said a former inmate named Konstantin, who spent time in the prison's solitary confinement cells. "When I think about it, I still break into cold sweat," he said, adding that he has struggled with mental illness since his release.

Set in the tundra, the Troika is built to hold about 1,000 prisoners in some of the most remote, strict and harsh conditions in Russia, which former convicts say can cross into torture.

"You had to make peace with the fact that no one will help you, that you're on your own," Aleksandr added.

The article includes a photograph of a sign at the entrance to the penal colony, reminiscent of Auschwitz, with the words "Happiness not far off."

According to a former inmate, "You could spend 10 years there, and not see and not know anything about anyone else."

When asked about the convicts' reaction to Mr. Navalny's death, he said: "No one gives a damn about anyone else there, because everyone only thinks about themselves and when they can get the hell out of there."

Still, he noted that any disruption of routine, such as the arrival of federal officials to the prison following an inmate death, would be welcome as a small respite. He recalled a time in 2022 when another inmate had died. "It may sound callous, you know, but his death stopped the beatings and somewhat lightened the daily routine," the person said.

Vladimir Putin, who Donald Trump has praised for being a strong leader, is today's version of Joseph Stalin, who killed millions of his own citizens and destroyed any vestige of freedom or prosperity in Russia. Aleksei Navalny was Putin's latest victim. Navalny possessed all the attributes that Putin lacks: honesty, charisma, an inspiring vision for Russia's future, and of course, the admiration, love, and gratitude of millions of Russian citizens.

Countless other Russian prisoners who have dared to stand up for democracy and human rights, like Vladimir Kara-Murza, are at risk of the same fate as Navalny, at any time.

In many respects, the people of Ukraine are no better off. Every day, if they survive the night, they wake up not knowing if it will be their last, the latest casualties of Putin's relentless attacks against civilian targets.

Vladimir Putin reminds us of the massive death and destruction that a

single cruel individual, devoid of morality and motivated by ideology, greed, and a lust for power, can inflict on millions of innocent people. That is not a sign of strength. It is the worst form of criminality. It is what Putin will be remembered for. It will be his legacy.

VENEZUELA

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, indigenous people in Latin America and around the world are facing unprecedented threats to their communities and cultural survival. Faced with increasing intrusions of settlers, illegal miners, loggers, ranchers, wildlife traffickers, narcotics traffickers, and explorers for oil and gas, coupled with woefully inadequate police protection, they are among the world's most vulnerable people.

This crisis is illustrated by the alarming situation facing the Yanomami people in the Upper Orinoco region of Venezuela, an area that is being destroyed by illegal gold miners. It is reminiscent of the decimation of Native American Tribes in past centuries in our own country, when millions were forced off their land, murdered, or infected with smallpox, measles, and other fatal diseases brought by White settlers.

The Venezuelan Government has an obligation to guarantee the right to health, as part of the right to life, enshrined in the country's Constitution. In the case of indigenous people like the Yanomami, this includes the adaptation of health services and programs to their unique circumstances and needs.

After the "Haximu Massacre of the Yanomami" in 1993, when 16 Yanomami were killed by a group of illegal miners, was brought before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Venezuelan Government signed a settlement agreement that established commitments regarding surveillance and control of illegal mining and healthcare for the Yanomami people. Although the Yanomami Health Plan yielded positive results between 2005 and 2010, it began to decline due to lack of resources and is now almost completely defunct. Currently, there is no healthcare available in the Yanomami territory in the Upper Orinoco region.

This crisis has resulted in a sharp increase in the prevalence of and death from preventable and curable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, among others. Malnutrition is also a pervasive problem, especially among children. Patients who require emergency treatment must be flown to Puerto Ayacucho, the state capital. The Yanomami in the border zone of Sierra Parima must go to Brazil to obtain health care.

The Government of Venezuela has repeatedly failed to protect the Yanomami people from violence, child

labor, and forced labor and sexual exploitation from illegal miners. The increased flow of Brazilian wildcat miners, coming into Venezuela in partnership with the Venezuelan military and corrupt civilian authorities to mine for gold and cassiterite, is contributing to the transmission of infectious diseases for these vulnerable communities due to their lack of immunity. Malaria, sexually transmitted infections, and mercury poisoning are closely linked to illegal mining.

According to the Yanomami's own records, between 2022 and mid-2023, 35 people died from malaria and tuberculosis in different sectors of Sierra Parima, which comprises only a portion of the Upper Orinoco region. The Yanomami reported 350 deaths due mainly to malaria between November 2023 and February 2024. The serious epidemic and negligent inaction of the Venezuelan Government have forced the Yanomami to abandon their villages and flee into the forest to escape the malaria epidemic.

Since 2021, the Venezuelan Government has received support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The Venezuelan Ministry of Health, through the U.N. Development Program, receives the supplies that are part of the malaria elimination strategy—mosquito nets, rapid diagnostic kits, medical treatments, and other equipment. But sorely lacking are the transportation logistics, infrastructure, and personnel to carry out malaria control and prevention activities in remote indigenous communities.

Anyone who has seen photographs of the devastation caused by illegal mining in the Upper Orinoco region cannot help but be appalled by the capacity of human greed to destroy the natural environment and the people and wildlife that depend on it. The Yanomami are responsible stewards of the forest who are being threatened, attacked, and infected by deadly diseases contracted from those who are illegally extracting resources from their territories.

While the Venezuelan Government has contributed to their plight by allowing and even profiting from the illegal mining in that sensitive region, the United States has a positive role to play. The Barbados Accords, signed by the Maduro regime and the opposition Unity Platform, were the result of negotiations between the Biden Administration and Mr. Maduro. They required the Venezuelan Government to create conditions for a free and fair election in 2024, and in return, the U.S. would grant licenses to relax sanctions on oil, bond, and gold transactions.

Like many, I had hoped the Barbados Accords were the beginning of a path for Venezuela to move beyond the years of internal division, repression, corruption, and misery that have caused millions to flee the country. But Maduro reneged on his commitments and arrested leading opposition candidate Maria Corina Machado, and

on January 29, the administration announced that the sanctions on gold will be snapped back in April.

Perhaps Maduro will reverse course again and do what he agreed to do under the Barbados Accords. But whether he does or not, absent strong action by the international community to make it more difficult for illegal miners and their profiteers to launder the proceeds, the suffering of the Yanomami people is likely to continue unabated.

TRIBUTE TO MISSIE LAMBERT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I rise today to honor Missie Lambert, who has been a valuable member of my staff and an incredible resource for the people of Arkansas for more than 15 years. With her compassion, dedication and trademark southern charm, she has helped thousands of people and set a standard for constituent service.

Missie is a 1980 graduate of Decatur High School in Decatur, AL. She attended Auburn University, where she was a cheerleader and graduated with a bachelor's degree in communications. She first used her talents in the business world, nonprofit sector, and as a wonderful wife and mother.

In 2009, she joined my staff in the U.S. House of Representatives to take what she thought was a small, part-time job assisting with veterans' issues. Her tremendous compassion and organizational skills soon made her an invaluable constituent service representative. She worked to create partnerships with veterans' agencies and organizations, quickly becoming a subject matter expert and authority people across the State were eager to consult.

During her time working for the U.S. House and Senate, Missie has handled more than 7,000 cases to help veterans, servicemembers, and their families navigate difficult processes with the Federal Government.

As a caseworker, she is best known for her persistence, never taking "no" for an answer on behalf of a veteran and exhausting every option or resource available. Countless times, it has been her diligence that helped track down a lost record and made the difference for a veteran and their family.

In addition to handling a large caseload, Missie took on the challenge of leading my office's nomination process for young people applying to the U.S. military academies. She spent months each year making sure every candidate would get the best possible consideration. In addition, she provided leadership for the entire Arkansas congressional delegation to improve the process for these youth across the State.

Missie is a multi-talented person with a great singing voice, a green thumb, and the gift of hospitality as she shares her famous cooking with friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Her kindness and expertise helped change

countless lives, comfort numerous families, and set a standard of excellence. Her friendship and counsel will be greatly missed. Although she is leaving us to be with her family in Alabama, Missie will always have a home in Arkansas.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING MARTIN HILDRETH COMPANY, INC

• Ms. ERNST. Madam President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each week I recognize an outstanding Iowa small business that exemplifies the American entrepreneurial spirit. This week, I am privileged to recognize Martin Hildreth Company of Rockwell City, IA, as the Senate Small Business of the Week.

Martin Hildreth founded the Martin Hildreth Company in 1954 to provide excavation contracting services in Rockwell City and the surrounding counties. Martin started the company after serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean war. He began his civilian career working with his father Ben in the petroleum industry at Hildreth Mobile Oil and Hildreth Super Service before embarking on his entrepreneurial journey. In 1990, Martin's son Tom joined the company full-time and currently serves as the president. Martin Hildreth Company has remained in the same location on High Street in Rockwell City since its inception, offering excavation services to the telecommunication and utility industries and gravedigging for cemeteries throughout Calhoun and the surrounding counties. In 2009, Tom's wife Theresa joined Martin Hildreth Company as their chief financial officer. In 2023, Martin Hildreth passed away, leaving behind a legacy of hard work and service to the Rockwell City community.

Martin Hildreth Company is truly a family-owned and operated business. Tom and Theresa's son David serves as vice president, marking the third generation of the Hildreth family legacy. David Hildreth started at the company part-time at the age of 14 and plans to lead it following Tom's retirement. In the near future, David's son Collin will be the fourth generation to join the family company.

The Hildreth family is actively involved in both the Rockwell City and Calhoun County communities. Tom Hildreth is a legend in the sport of wrestling. After a decorated college career at Westmar College, Tom coached wrestling at the high school and middle school levels and was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and the Iowa High School Athletic Association Wrestling Hall of Fame. In addition to serving as chief financial officer for the Martin Hildreth Company, Theresa also serves as executive director of the Calhoun County Economic Development Corporation. Service to the