to honor Roy Colannino, Police Chief of the great city of Revere, Massachusetts, and a highly distinguished member of our Nation's law enforcement community. Chief Colannino recently retired from the Revere Police Department after dedicating 37 years of his life to the cause of protecting the safety of his fellow citizens and the community at large.

Chief Colannino joined the Revere Police Department in 1965 as a member of the Police Reserves, and was immediately recognized as a bright and energetic addition to the force. During his 37-year career, he served as Patrolman, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain and Chief. While working full time and raising a family, Chief Colannino continued his education at Northeastern University in Boston where he earned a Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice in 1981. As he ascended the ranks of the Revere Police Department, he earned high accolades from his superior officers and the deep respect of his fellow colleagues at each stage of his career with the force. As the executive law enforcement officer in Revere, Chief Colannino developed a highly successful community-policing program that joined the Revere Police Department with the city's community leaders in an innovative and effective new partnership. His commitment to incorporate his officer corps into the fabric of every neighborhood has been particularly beneficial for this diverse community.

Mr. Speaker, since September 11, 2001, our nation has rightfully reflected on the incredible service our police and fire professionals provide to our communities. Roy Colannino exemplifies that service and the sacrifices these men and women, and their families, endure for us on a daily basis. He has served the City of Revere, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and our nation at an incomparable level of professionalism, and dedication and human caring for nearly four decades. I ask that my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives join me in wishing him all the best in his retirement.

CHRISTOPHER BLAHA—HERO AVENGER

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 13, 2002

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank and praise Army Lieutenant Christopher Blaha for his heroic actions in the defense of our nation. I would like to share with my fellow colleagues the following two articles describing Lieutenant Blaha's incredible service in our fight against terrorism. September 11, 2001 was a horrific day for the United States, yet brave men, such as Lieutenant Blaha, show us all that the spirit of America has not, and will not, be broken. Mr. Speaker, we will prevail.

[From the New York Post, Mar. 11, 2002]

FRONTLINE GI'S BATTLE CRY FOR BUDDIES KILLED IN WTC ATTACK—HERO AVENGER

(By John Lehmann)

On every grenade he threw at the al Qaeda fighters, New Yorker Christopher Blaha wrote the name of the best friend he lost to terrorists on Sept. 11.

Also burned into the Army lieutenant's mind was the memory of a second buddy, who died trying to save lives at the World Trade Center.

After a fierce eight-day fight in remote Afghan mountains, 24-year-old Blaha, from Great Neck, L.I., returned to safety yesterday and immediately spoke of his two lost pals, Andrew Stergiopoulos, who worked for bond firm Cantor Fitzgerald, and FDNY firefighter Jonathan Ielpi.

''There was definitely a vindictive side to it—I can go back and tell their families everything we did.'' Blaha said, as he rested at the Bagram air base near Kandahar.

As his fellow soldiers cheered the returning troops, Blaha, fighting with the Army's 10th Mountain Division based in upstate New York, told how he had written Stergiopoulos' name on his grenades.

Blaha's mom, Cooky said her son had formed a bond for life with Steriopoulos as the pair grew up in Great Neck, playing ice hockey for a community team, the Great Neck Bruins.

John Hughes, the father of skating goldmedalist Sarah Hughes, also played on the team. ''Andrew and Chris were real close—I'm just so proud of what he's done,'' Cooky Blaha told The Post.

Steriopoulos' brother, George, said from his home in Great Neck that his family was ''touched'' by Blaha's words. ''It's been very hard,'' he said. ''It would have been Andrew's 24th birthday on March 7.''

''I saw Chris going off to boot camp, and we've been hoping that he's OK. That's really touching, what he said.''

Ielpi, a 29-year New York City firefighter with two young sons, had known the Blaha family for years, having attended St. Aloysius elementary school in Great Neck with Christopher Blaha's eldest brother, Jack.

Ielpi's mom, Anne, said last night her family had been thinking of Blaha during his Afghanistan mission and was hoping he returned safely.

''We've known the family for years and we think it's great if he can get a little retaliation,'' she said. ''It means a lot to everyone.''

Blaha had told his mom before leaving for Uzbekistan in January that he would dedicate his mission to his friends.

''He's just a kid from Great Neck really, but he rang this morning and told me he had been ordering in the planes with the bombs and I couldn't believe it—he's made us all proud,'' she said.

[From the News Day, Mar. 12, 2002]

A MESSAGE WITH EVERY GRENADE—HOW SOLDIER FROM LI REMEMBERS A FRIEND

(By Keiko Morris)

Mourners have remembered those lost on Sept. 11 with flowers, letters, balloons released into the sky and eulogies. 2nd Lt. Chris Blaha had his own way.

He wrote the name of a childhood friend, who died in the terrorist attacks, on every grenade he lobbed at enemy Taliban and al-Qaida positions.

Blaha, a 24-year-old Army officer from Great Neck, marked the end of an intense battle with an excited call to his mother on Sunday, using a reporter's satellite phone. He told his mom about his role in Operation Anaconda, the most recent U.S.-led military offensive in Afghanistan.

He said he was filthy, cold and unshaven, but safe. He told her that he directed a B–52 where to drop bombs on enemy positions. And he told her about the grenades—every one in memory of his friend, Andrew Stergiopoulos, 23, who worked at Cantor Fitzgerald.

''Chris was in Ranger School on 911,'' said his mother. Cooky Blaha, an office manager who lives in Great Neck. ''I had to tell him . . .'' He was infuriated. she remembered.

''Now he feels like he can do something about it,'' she said. ''I'm proud of him.''

Stergiopoulos was not the only childhood friend of Blaha's to die in the attacks. Jonathan Ielpi, 29, a New York City firefighter and father of two, was friends with Blaha's older brother, Jack. Blaha went into battle with the memory of both in his heart, his mother said.

Blaha went to Hofstra University and graduated in December 2000 on an ROTC scholarship. He went directly to basic training and later to an Army Ranger School at Fort Benning in Georgia. He left for Uzbekistan in January and was sent to Afghanistan in late February, his mother said. That was about the last time she heard from him until Sunday.

''I was a little worried when those guys got killed and I thought things weren't going too well,'' Cooky Blaha said. ''. . . He's a little, short, tough kid. He shops at Nordstroms, wears Armani. He drives a Porsche. He's a Great Neck kid, so I was worried. But he did great.''

All three knew each other since they were affectionately known as ''rink rats,'' young Great Neck skaters who either play hockey or take up figure skating. They all played for the Great Neck Bruins in a youth hockey program.

The Great Neck Bruins retired both Ielpi's and Stergiopoulos' numbers and a banner was hung at the Parkwood Ice Rink as a permanent memorial, said Anne Ielpi, the mother of Jonathan Ielpi. Saddle Rock Bridge, the place where everyone went to stare at the burning towers on Sept. 11, was renamed the 9–11 Memorial Bridge.

Anne Ielpi heard of Blaha's tribute from a friend on Sunday morning.

''I said, 'Good for him, keep on throwing them,''' Ielpi said. ''Knowing that someone is over there doing something in my son's name, it gives me solace.''

PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING, SALUTING AND COMMENDING FIREFIGHTER RONNIE HENDERSON—ENGINE NO. 279

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 13, 2002

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, as a Tribute to Firefighter Ronnie Henderson of Engine Number 279, a member of the Vulcan's Society and one of the fallen heroes of September 11th, I would like to insert the following proclamation into the RECORD:

Whereas, September 11, 2001 was a day of horror and tragedy that will forever live in the memory of Americans, and;

Whereas, More than 3,000 people from many occupations, nationalities, ethnic groups, religions and creeds were brutally murdered by terrorists, and;

Whereas, Members of the New York City Fire Department, New York City Police Department, Port Authority and other Public Safety Personnel, through their valiant, courageous and heroic efforts saved the lives of thousands under unprecedented destructive circumstances, and;

Whereas, More than 300 New York City Firefighters lost their lives in the effort to save others, and;

Whereas, Congressman Major R. Owens and the people of the 11th Congressional District salute the bravery and dedication of all who gave their full measure of devotion, and;

Whereas, We deem it appropriate to highlight the courage and valor of individuals