

JEFFREY MATTISON WERSHOW:
KILLED IN IRAQ

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to speak about a very brave young man, Jeffrey Mattison Wershow, who was killed in the line of duty in Iraq. A specialist in the Florida National Guard who served with the Army's 124th Infantry Regiment, he died at the very young age of twenty-two. Jeffrey was born in Gainesville, a city which is in my congressional district, Florida's third.

Compounding the tragedy of Jeffrey's death is that he was killed in Iraq while trying to keep the peace after the U.S. invasion had already ended. He was assigned to be part of a group of soldiers in a 124-man group assigned to escort U.S. officials. He was killed while guarding a convoy of vehicles while they were parked outside a campus building at Baghdad University when an Iraqi man approached him, pulled out a gun, and shot him.

For his service in "Iraqi Freedom" Jeffrey received the Army Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Achievement Medal, the Parachute Badge and the Army Service Medal. The Army in fact, has recommended that he receive the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart for his dedicated and honorable service in combat.

It is truly impressive all that Jeffrey had accomplished during his young life. He began his active duty in the U.S. Army back in June 1999. After he finished his specialized training, he went on to join the 82nd Airborne Division of the Army's 505 Parachute Infantry Regiment. From there, he went on to continue his service with the National Guard.

A curious and bright young man, Jeffrey had a burning interest in history and political science. He was active in Gainesville politics, and served as co-campaign manager to the campaign of one of my close friends, Cynthia Chestnut, during her County Commission campaign in 2002. He also participated in politics at Santa Fe Community College, was elected to the Student Senate, and was intending to run for student body president.

In a photo taken of him for which he will be fondly remembered, he can be seen patriotically waving the flag during last year's University of Florida Homecoming parade. Jeffrey, riding in the veteran's float, in a demonstration of boundless patriotism and limitless energy, jumped out of the boat and ran down the street waving the American flag to energize the crowd.

Jeffrey will be deeply missed by all of the people who knew him. I will keep Jeffrey and his family members with me in my prayers and thoughts.

2003 CYPRUS

HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, as I have done every year, I rise again today to reiterate my

fierce objection to the illegal occupation of the island of Cyprus by Turkish troops and declare my grave concern for the future of the area. The island's twenty nine years of internal division make the status quo absolutely unacceptable.

In July 1974, Turkish troops captured the northern part of Cyprus, seizing more than a third of the island. The Turkish troops expelled 200,000 Greek-Cypriots from their homes and killed 5,000 citizens of the once-peaceful island. The Turkish invasion was a conscious and deliberate attempt at ethnic cleansing. Turkey proceeded to install 40,000 military personnel on Cyprus. Today, these troops, in conjunction with United Nations peacekeeping forces, make the small island of Cyprus one of the most militarized areas in the world. Over a quarter of a century later, approximately 1,500 Greek-Cypriots remain missing, including four Americans.

The Green Line, a 113-mile barbed wire fence, separates the Greek-Cypriot community from its Turkish-Cypriot counterpart. The Turkish Northern Republic of Cyprus (TNRC), recognized by no nation in the world except for Turkey, prohibits Greek-Cypriots from freely crossing the Green Line to visit the towns and communities of their families. With control of about 37 percent of the island, Turkey's military occupation has had severe consequences, most notably the dislocation of the Greek-Cypriot population and the resulting refugees.

Twenty-nine years later, the forced separation of these two communities still exists despite efforts by the United Nations (U.N.) and G-8 leadership to mend this rift between north and south. The U.N., with the explicit support of the United States, has sponsored several rounds of proximity talks between the former President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Glafcos Clerides, and Mr. Rauf Denktash, the self-proclaimed leader of the occupied northern part of the island.

In March 2003, the United Nations-sponsored Cyprus peace talks at the Hague between newly-elected President of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, and Mr. Denktash came to an abrupt halt. Responsibility for this unfortunate setback in the peace process rests largely with Mr. Denktash who rejected U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's Plan to end the 29-year division of Cyprus. It is a shame that the Secretary General's personal diplomacy was met by this kind of flat-out rejection. A large share of the blame also rests with the Turkish military and hard-line nationalists in Ankara, who have maintained the illegal Turkish military occupation of Cyprus since Turkish forces invaded the island in 1974. If the Government of Turkey were sincere about settling the Cyprus problem, they could have put the necessary pressure on Mr. Denktash to say "yes" to the U.N. Plan.

In sharp contrast to Mr. Denktash, Mr. Papadopoulos said "yes" to a public referendum on the Secretary General's plan. His response is consistent with years of efforts by the Government of Cyprus to try to negotiate in good faith to reunify the country—efforts that have been consistently rebuffed by the separatist Turkish-Cypriot regime. I praise President Papadopoulos for stressing that the Greek-Cypriot side will continue the efforts for reaching a solution to the Cyprus question both before and after Cyprus joins the European Union (EU).

In April 2003, the House of Representatives unanimously approved House Resolution 165, introduced by Mr. BEREUTER and myself, which expresses support for a renewed effort to find a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Cyprus problem by declaring appreciation for the efforts of Kofi Annan. The bill also expresses strong disappointment that Mr. Denktash rejected the comprehensive settlement offered by Secretary General Annan, thereby denying the Turkish-Cypriot people the opportunity to determine their own future.

A few days later, Cyprus experienced a major historic event on April 16, 2003, with the signing of the Treaty of Accession to the European Union. For the first time, the people of Cyprus have the opportunity to seal their future when Cyprus becomes a member of the E.U. next year. Upon accession to the European Union, Cyprus will, in its capacity as a full member, be firmly anchored to the western political and security structures, enhancing both geographically and qualitatively the operational capabilities of the Western world.

Needless to say, it would be in the best interest of Turkey to cooperate with the United Nations and the rest of the international community on Cyprus in order to advance its own membership in the European Union. Northern Cyprus will perhaps be the greatest beneficiary of Cypriot membership and resolution of the entire affair. It is currently in a state of economic distress that is being exacerbated by Turkish intransigence. Sadly, the people living in the northern part of the island continue to be mired in poverty as a direct result of their leadership's and Turkey's separatist policies. By joining the rest of Cyprus, it would become part of an already progressive economy, eliminating its financial dependence on Turkey.

So far we have seen that both Turkey and Mr. Denktash have sought to create preconditions on Cyprus' accession by tying that process to the resolution of a comprehensive settlement in Cyprus. The United States should remind Turkey that any threat against the Republic of Cyprus will be met with strong opposition and that Turkey does not possess any veto power over European Union membership. Promotion of Cyprus' membership will remove what has been a stumbling block in comprehensive settlement negotiations, and it will allow Turkey to strive toward the laudable goal of its own accession.

Despite the continued Turkish intransigence, earlier this year the Cypriot Government announced a package of measures aimed at assisting those Turkish Cypriots residing under the control of the Turkish occupation army. This package includes a wide range of political, social, humanitarian, educational and economic measures that will enhance the ability of the Turkish Cypriots to enjoy many of the benefits that the Republic of Cyprus offers to its citizens—as well as to share in the benefits of European Union membership. Far beyond a merely symbolic gesture, the package is a substantive program to integrate the Turkish Cypriot community into the larger Cypriot society as the country prepares to join the EU.

At the same time, the Turkish occupation regime partially lifted restrictions on freedom across the artificial line of division created by Turkey's military occupation. Since then, hundreds of thousands of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have crossed the line, to visit homes and areas of their own country that