

on "parole," citing health reasons. The regime's callousness towards ailing political prisoners is well documented.

Now, independent Cuban journalists are reporting that Cuba's prisons have been virtually emptied of medical personnel. Why? Mr. Castro decided to send them to Venezuela and other places to advance his personal expansionist agenda.

Writing in the Spanish newspaper, *El Pais*, Nobel prize winner Jose Saramo, a Portuguese communist and close friend of Castro commented, "Cuba has won no heroic victory by executing these three men, but it has lost my confidence, damaged my hopes and robbed me of illusions."

Without anything that resembles due process, three alleged ferry hijackers were killed by firing squad in Cuba, while others got long jail terms.

Illusions, as Castro lover Jose Saramo has only now begun to acknowledge, often persist despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in the case of Castro's Cuba.

Despite decades of credible reports of widespread egregious violations of human rights, including the pervasive use of torture and vicious beatings of political prisoners by the Cuban government, some have clung to indefensibly foolish illusions of Castro's revolution.

Despite the fact that the Cuban government systematically denies its people the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association, and severely restricts workers' rights, including the right to form independent trade unions, some have, nevertheless, clung to illusion.

Despite the fact that Castro maintains an unimaginably vast network of surveillance by the thugs in his secret police and Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs)—neighbors spying on neighbors—some continue to embrace bogus perceptions—illusions about Cuba.

In his book, "Against All Hope, a Memoir of Life in Castro's Gulags" Armando Valladares, a courageous and amazing man who spent 22 years in Cuban prisons wrote:

"The government of Cuba and defenders of the Cuban Revolution denied that incidents that I recount (in the book) ever happened. Castro sympathizers, who were more subtle, said the incidents I described were exaggerations. And there were others, well meaning, who simply could not bring themselves to believe that such horrors, crimes and torture existed in the political prisons of Cuba."

"My response to those who still try to justify Castro's tyranny with the excuse that he has built schools and hospitals is this: Stalin, Hitler and Pinochet also built schools and hospitals, and like Castro, they also tortured and assassinated opponents. They built concentration and extermination camps and eradicated all liberties, committing the worst crimes against humanity."

"Unbelievably, while many non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International and America's Watch have denounced the human rights situation in Cuba, there has been a continuing love affair on the part of the media and many intellectuals with Fidel Castro."

That love affair—that illusion—seemed to crash and burn with the onset of the current crackdown on dissidents. The EU took action in June 2003 by limiting high-level EU governmental visits and inviting Cuban dissidents to national day celebrations. But their memories are short. In January of this

year, at the initiative of the Spanish government, the EU temporarily suspended these measures for a six-month period.

Let me mention a few of the ones who were summarily sentenced and remain in prison. Omar Rodriguez Saludes, an independent journalist known to ride his bicycle to news conferences: 27 years. Hector Palacios, one of the key figures promoting the Varela Project: 25 years. Oscar Espinosa Chepe, who wrote critical articles about the Cuban economy for the Internet: 25 years. The President of the Independent United Confederation of Cuban Workers (CUTC), Pedro Pablo Alvarez, 25 years. Journalist Raul Rivero and Ricardo Gonzalez Afonso, an editor at "De Cuba" magazine, each got 20 years. The list goes on and on.

It was a true honor to hear from Economist Morta Beatriz Rogue today, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison and released for health reasons in 2004. We salute her courage to continue the fight on behalf of those who are still in prison today.

For its part, the Bush Administration has made its deep and abiding concern for the political prisoners and the protection of elemental human rights in Cuba abundantly clear. At the time of the crackdown, former Secretary of State Colin Powell declared:

"In recent days the Cuban government has undertaken the most significant act of political repression in decades. We call on Castro to end this despicable repression and free these prisoners of conscience. The United States and the international community will be unrelenting in our insistence that Cubans who seek peaceful change be permitted to do so."

In like manner, the Congress has consistently demanded the immediate release of all the prisoners and support of the right of the Cuban people to exercise fundamental political and civil liberties. H. Res. 179, a resolution offered by Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN in April 2003, passed by a vote of 414-0, 11 present. In April of 2001, I sponsored a resolution, H. Res. 91, calling on the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva to condemn Cuba's human rights abuse and appoint a Special Rapporteur for Cuba. While it passed, there were a disturbing number of negative votes. That vote was 347-44 with 22 voting present. We have another opportunity today to move forward a resolution offered by my Colleague, Mr. MENENDEZ, to show that these prisoners are not forgotten.

Fidel Castro, his brother Raul, and numerous leaders of Cuba's dictatorship, are directly responsible for crimes against humanity past—and present. Someday these oppressors will be held to account and the people of Cuba will live in freedom.

Note on the Varela Project: Named after a 19th century anti-slavery, pro-independence priest, Felix Varela, the Varela Project was a petition to the National Assembly seeking a nationwide referendum calling for basic human rights, an amnesty for political prisoners, private enterprise and election law reform to facilitate free and fair elections. On May 10th of 2002, more than 11,000 signatures were initially submitted—easily exceeding the constitutionally prescribed 10,000. Castro, however, responded by orchestrating his own petition drive that said Cuba's socialist system could not be changed, leading the rubber stamp National Assembly to declare Cuba's socialist system "irrevocable".

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMAL COUNTY COMMISSIONER GREGORY PARKER

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of Commissioner Gregory Parker. Commissioner Parker is not only the youngest Commissioner to win a seat in Comal County, he is also the first African American elected to this office.

Commissioner Parker is a military veteran who has served his country through hard work and commitment to his values.

Like many of us, Commissioner Parker had to work his way to the top. He spent 13 years working in the technology sector, eventually earning the title of Director of Software Development at Austin Data Systems.

Commissioner Parker founded Gregory Parker Consulting in 1999, where he serves as Senior Partner and Senior Policy Analyst. It was here that Commissioner Parker distinguished himself with his commitment to the issues important to Comal County and to the State of Texas. He is a man who believes that through dedicated community research, and traditional American values, we can provide the quality of policy that our citizens deserve.

Commissioner Gregory Parker, who resides in New Braunfels, is also the hard working single father of Jean Luc Parker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to honor the past and future accomplishments of Commissioner Gregory Parker.

UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION
MISSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO: A CASE
FOR PEACEKEEPING REFORM

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the recent U.N. Peacekeeping scandal in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We know that there have been disturbing allegations of sexual misconduct and exploitation of refugees by U.N. peacekeepers and civilian personnel assigned to the U.N. peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Human rights groups and the U.N.'s own internal investigations have uncovered over 150 allegations against Mission personnel. These allegations typically involve peacekeepers' sexual contact with Congolese women and girls, usually in exchange for food or small sums of money. According to the U.N., these contacts occurred with regularity, and many involved girls under the age of 18, with some as young as 11-14. Even more troubling are allegations of rape, forced prostitution, and demands of sex for jobs by U.N. civilian personnel.

Some in our audience might be thinking that apart from the more serious allegations of rape and other sexual abuse, prostitution is the world's oldest profession and that it is unrealistic to ask soldiers away from their families to abstain from sex. This attitude of "boys

will be boys” is indeed common. In fact, the U.N. reported that it encountered significant and widespread resistance to its investigation, and that numerous U.N. personnel were unwilling to identify perpetrators.

The reality, however, is that this state of affairs is not just a private matter involving only the personal moral choices of the peacekeepers. Hundreds of vulnerable women and children are being re-victimized; the reputation of the United Nations is being badly damaged; and lack of internal discipline is compromising security and effectiveness of the peacekeeping operations. From any perspective, this situation is deplorable.

Let me expand on a few of these points. First, United Nations forces conducting operations under United Nations command and control are tasked with upholding international humanitarian law and have a particular duty to protect women and children from sexual assault or exploitation. Peacekeepers have a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of Congolese society. When the peacekeepers become the exploiters, something is dreadfully wrong.

Second, the civilian population is especially vulnerable. There are frequent outbreaks of armed violence in the eastern half of the Congo, especially in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri, as the country emerges from its second war in the last ten years. The civilian population in these areas has experienced systematic acts of rape, torture, murder, and other abuse. Many of the Congolese women and girls in the camps which the peacekeepers are protecting have been orphaned and/or are victims of rape which occurred during the conflicts. Investigators found that they have experienced significant trauma which continues to affect them today.

Poverty and hunger are also significant factors contributing to the abuse. Children driven by hunger approach the peacekeepers seeking food or the smallest sums of money. Many families are cut off from their farmlands because of fear of attacks from militia, and few alternate employment options exist. According to the U.N.’s own investigation, food supplies in some camps are reportedly inadequate.

Third, the continued toleration of sexual exploitation and abuse by U.N. leaders is severely damaging the reputation and the effectiveness of the organization. All troop-contributing nations recognize the Code of Personal Conduct for Blue Helmets as binding. This Code explicitly bans any exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, and renders the perpetrators liable to disciplinary action for serious misconduct. In fact, the U.N. has promulgated at least five U.N. codes of conduct prohibiting sexual activity with children (persons under 18 years of age) in the Congo, and yet the practice continues unabated.

This activity is prohibited under rule four of the Code of Conduct for Blue Helmets, the MONUC code of conduct, the Secretary-General’s bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/13), section seven of the Secretary-General’s bulletin on observance by United Nations forces of international humanitarian law of 1999 (ST/SGB/1999/13), and new “non-fraternisation” regulations promulgated by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in a letter to the U.N. Security Council on February 9th. That the abuse continues

and is characterized by internal U.N. reports as “significant, widespread and on-going” appears to indicate there is rather a state of “zero-compliance with zero-tolerance” throughout the mission.

In the words of Dr. Sarah Mendelson, Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who testified in a joint issue forum before the House Armed Services Committee and the Helsinki Committee last fall, “Military misconduct is a threat to any mission. When that misconduct involves human rights abuses, it affects the credibility and reputation of peacekeepers and can enrage local populations. When those implicated are also responsible for force protection, they can compromise their main military mission. . . . Those peacekeepers who serve with honor are being tainted by the minority who purchase sex with these women and girls and by the even smaller minority who actively engage in the grave human rights abuse of trafficking.”

The U.N. has struggled with similar allegations regarding peacekeeper misconduct and sexual exploitation in the past ten years in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, as well as on the European continent in Kosovo and Bosnia. Some of the underlying issues are complex, such as how to ensure perpetrators are held accountable when no effective U.N. mechanism exists, and Member states are unwilling to prosecute. Yet other simple fixes also exist, such as the creation of an offender database, holding commanders accountable for the conduct of their troops, and banning nations from peacekeeping missions which refuse to take disciplinary action. The seeming reluctance of the U.N. to act on some of these seemingly obvious solutions raises questions about the willingness of leadership to undertake reform, and raises questions about the ability of the U.N. to police itself.

Furthermore, the United States Congress has a fiduciary obligation to do so. The United States is the world’s largest donor to the peacekeeping mission in the Congo, contributing over \$200 million annually, and contributes almost over a quarter of the entire peacekeeping budget of the United Nations. The Administration has asked the Congress for an additional \$780 million for peacekeeping operations in the supplemental budget request.

We hope that continual Congressional efforts will spur needed change, not only in the Congo, but in the standard operating practices of U.N. peacekeeping around the world.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMAL COUNTY JUDGE DANNY SCHEEL

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the dedicated public service of Comal County Judge Danny Scheel.

Judge Danny Scheel is an essential part of Comal County. He is a fifth-generation resident of the county, and has spent a distinguished career in the public sector, holding the positions of Comal County Constable and Comal County Commissioner.

He has also been active as an advocate for his community on the State level. He is a

member of the Alamo Area Council of Governments, represents Comal County on the Texas Association of Regional Councils Service Board and Employee Health Benefits Board, and he is Co-Chairman of the Central Texas County Judges’ Mobility Alliance.

He has been responsible for major improvements in Comal County’s emergency management program. In response to the flood of 1998, he hired an Emergency Management Coordinator and established emergency procedures that helped the county cope with the flood of 2002.

Danny Scheel has been recognized as New Braunfels Citizen of the Year, A Friend of the 4-H, and was selected to interview with the Today Show during the 2002 floods.

Mr. Speaker, he has set a wonderful example of commitment to public service, and I am proud to have this opportunity to thank him.

IN MEMORY OF MR. LEWIS FENTON

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Lewis Lowry Fenton, who passed away February 10, 2005 at the age of 79. Lewis’s life long dedication to education and community service will forever remind us of the importance of kindness, dedication and outstanding civic leadership.

Born in Palo Alto, California, Lewis completed his undergraduate and law degree from Stanford University. After serving in the Army Air Corps, he partnered with his mentor, J. Hampton Hoge, and established the Hoge and Fenton Law Firm in Monterey, California. After the firm expanded, Lewis remained counsel to two firms, Fenton & Keller in Monterey and Hoge, Fenton, Jones and Appel in San Jose.

Lewis’s keen interest in professional and community activities are extensive and reveal a lifetime of dedication to his career and the improvement of a long list of community organizations. In 1963 he was the president of the Monterey County Bar Association and one of the top civil litigators on the Central Coast. Amongst his many awards he was listed in both Who’s Who in America and the “Best Lawyers in America”. Throughout his life, Lewis showed enduring commitment to teaching law. He was a faculty member at the Hastings College of Law and the Stanford Law School.

Lewis’s civic duties also made a significant impact on the Monterey community. In the Community Foundation of Monterey County, he was the President of the Board of Governors. A board member of many organizations, Lewis made a pioneering contribution to the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula. He was also a founding board member of the Monterey Bay Aquarium and a founding board member of the Board of Trustees for the York School, where he devoted 50 years of extensive involvement.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to remember Lewis for his honorable career and his contribution to our society. Lewis consistently went above and beyond the roles bestowed upon him, and has left a legacy of leadership and inspiration. Our thoughts go out to his family. While he will