

In the words of country singer Randy Travis in his song "America Will Always Stand," he sings the following lyrics about the American soldier: "Walking through the fires of danger, there are those who gave their lives. They're the world's greatest heroes, and we won't forget their sacrifice. So raise the banner called Old Glory. Let us join our fellow man. History will tell this story, America will always stand."

Mr. Speaker, history will tell the story of all the brave soldiers like Staff Sergeant Michael Durbin who walked through the fires of danger for freedom for Americans.

That's just the way it is.

SRI LANKA PEACE PROCESS RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to ask that my colleagues join me in supporting a resolution I introduced today that urges the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to engage positively in peace talks. I am deeply concerned about the ongoing violence caused by terrorism in Sri Lanka. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil, also known as the Tamil Tigers, is a group designated by the United States State Department as a terrorist organization. I hope this body can express its disapproval of the violence and instead voice full support for the resumption of constructive peace talks between both sides.

For over two decades, there has been armed strife between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers, costing an estimated 65,000 lives. In a breakthrough agreement brokered by Norway back in 2002, the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers signed a cease-fire. Unfortunately, the Tamil Tigers have committed a number of violations, and the peace process has broken down.

On August 12, 2005, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister was brutally assassinated by a sniper, and it has been widely acknowledged that the LTTE members had targeted him for some time. Though LTTE has denied any involvement, past history demonstrates that the group never claims responsibility for their crimes. There is now clear evidence, for example, that the Tamil Tigers ordered assassinations of India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, President R. Premadasa, and others. These patterns indicate that the Tamil Tigers were likely involved in Mr. Kadirgamar's assassination.

In addition to the death of Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission has recorded over 3,000 violations of the cease-fire agreement by the Tamil Tigers. These violations include assassinations and abductions, particularly

the forcible abduction of children for armed combat and kidnapping individuals for ransom.

This past December marked the bloodiest month since the cease-fire agreement came into effect in 2002. Nearly 70 people, about 40 of them from the Sri Lanka Army and Navy, have been killed as a result of the Tamil Tigers' guerilla actions. The Tamil Tigers continue to follow their past policy of denying any responsibility for these actions.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that the U.S. continue to reject the actions and violent tactics of the Tamil Tigers and apply international pressure to request that they begin conducting themselves in a responsible and credible manner. We must insist that the Tamil Tigers demonstrate a willingness to change, abstain from violence, and establish their commitment to the peace process.

The recent pledge to continue peace talks in February in Geneva, Switzerland, is encouraging, but it must include positive engagement by both parties. It is necessary that the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers renegotiate a cease-fire agreement and implement the agreement in a productive and successful manner so the hostilities do not resume. Without progress at the negotiating table, there is a real threat of another armed conflict.

Mr. Speaker, Sri Lanka is Asia's oldest democracy and remains a close friend of the United States. As the founder and current cochair of the Congressional Caucus on Sri Lanka, I encourage the Bush administration to take the steps necessary to support Sri Lanka during these trying times and continue to strengthen ties between the United States and Sri Lanka.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in cosponsoring this resolution. Congress must convey the importance of a constructive peace process and urge both parties to cooperate in good faith in order to find a fair and lasting resolution to Sri Lanka's armed conflict. It is time we ensure peace in Sri Lanka as well as greater stability throughout the South Asia region.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. OSBORNE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

URGING RELEASE OF DR. GONZALEZ-MEJIAS AND DR. DARIAS-MESA

Mr. MACK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MACK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to a great humanitarian injustice facing two Cuban refugee doctors and their families.

On April 10, 2002, Dr. David Gonzalez-Mejias and Dr. Marialis Darias-Mesa were notified by the U.S. Government that they had been awarded documents that would allow them to immigrate to America and begin a new life in freedom.

Unfortunately, the Cuban Government denied these doctors permission to leave Cuba with their spouses and children. They were told because they were doctors, they would have to remain in Cuba for another 3 years. However, their families were permitted to leave and now reside in Florida.

Three years later, in April 2005, the doctors again sought permission to leave Cuba. That permission was once again denied, and they were told they would have to remain in Cuba. Fearing the Castro regime would continue to block their exodus to freedom and reunification with their families, the doctors copied their original United States parole papers and made a desperate attempt to escape tyranny.

While on a boat fleeing Cuba, they were picked up by the United States Coast Guard and turned over to the Bahamian Government along with 17 other Cuban nationals at Cay Sal in the Bahamas. Unlike the other refugees, Dr. Gonzalez-Mejias and Dr. Darias-Mesa had been awarded an authorization for parole of an alien allowing them to enter the United States, and they should not have been turned over to the Bahamian Government. But they were, and since then they have been detained in the Bahamas in deplorable conditions.

Since June, the United States Government has actively sought the release of the doctors to U.S. custody and to prevent their repatriation to Cuba. However, despite numerous official requests for their release and meetings between our governments, including a meeting I had with the Bahamian Ambassador to the United States, the Bahamian Government continues to debate, deliberate and drag its feet about releasing these doctors to our custody.

Mr. Speaker, the time is past due for the Bahamian Government to release these doctors to the United States. Our two countries have always enjoyed strong relations, and we all want that friendship to continue without question or concern. But in this matter, the Bahamian Government is not acting as friends should. They are denying liberty to two refugees who were awarded freedom by the United States.

This past weekend I spent nearly 2 hours with the families of these doctors. I was moved by their incredible strength and faith that their family would one day be reunited. I was also