

and airmen mobilized in support of American operations overseas. In addition, thousands of National Guard members have responded to the litany of major disasters that devastated several areas of the country in the recent years. I applaud the National Guard for its vital work in protecting our country at home and abroad and commend its 375 years of dedicated service.

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TRIBUTE TO GUION S. BLUFORD, JR.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize Guion S. Bluford, Jr. for being the 2011 recipient of the Pennsylvania Society Gold Medal for Distinguished Achievement.

Mr. Bluford was born on November 22, 1942, to Guion Senior and Lolita Bluford in Philadelphia, PA. Mr. Bluford grew up in inner-city Philadelphia during a time of great prejudice and social change. As a youth he spent his free time reading about aviation technology, building model aircrafts, and dreaming of flying aircrafts.

Mr. Bluford attended Pennsylvania State University and joined the Air Force ROTC Program, receiving his FAA pilot license while still a senior in college. After graduating college in 1964 Mr. Bluford was assigned to the 556th Tactical Fighter Squadron in Vietnam and flew over 140 combat missions in Southeast Asia.

In 1978, Mr. Bluford was selected as one of NASA's class of 35 astronauts. On August 30, 1980, Mr. Bluford became America's first African American in space when he flew to orbit aboard the shuttle *Challenger*. During his career at NASA he flew on several other space missions, and when he retired in July 1993, he had logged more than 688 hours in space.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Guion S. Bluford, Jr., for his years of service to our country. I invite my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Bluford for his recent award and wish him well in the future.

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TRIBUTE TO MARTY PETERSON

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, today I join with Idaho's senior Senator MIKE CRAPO to recognize and pay tribute to the exceptional dedication of Marty Peterson, who is retiring after 51 years of public service in our great State.

For nearly 20 years, Marty has served as the special assistant to the president of the University of Idaho. He has served seven U of I presidents during that time, giving them valuable insight into the politics of the State as he oversaw the government affairs work of the university.

Marty has an in-depth understanding of Idaho's government, having served as the budget director under Governors John Evans and Cecil Andrus. He also served on the staff of U.S. Senator Frank Church and was executive direc-

tor of the Association of Idaho Cities. His counsel was always valuable and insightful.

It is no wonder, when Idaho was going to celebrate its 100th birthday in 1990, he was asked to oversee the planning and implementation of the State's centennial celebration. Twenty years later, he was the cochair of the committee that planned the rededication of Idaho's newly restored capitol building. Marty could always be counted on to deliver quality results.

His education and military service may have had something to do with his success. At the age of 17, as a junior in high school, he joined the Army National Guard. Marty served 8 years and was a staff sergeant when he was discharged.

Marty is a graduate of Columbia Basin College, the University of Idaho, and Harvard University's Senior Managers in Government Program. But through the years, Marty never stopped learning. He adapted, he studied and continued to provide good counsel to those who sought out his advice.

He consistently shares his time and expertise with community groups. Currently, he serves on the board of directors of the Foundation for Idaho History, North Idaho Chamber of Commerce, Idaho Humanities Council, and the James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy, as well as on the advisory board for the School of Journalism and Mass Media at the University of Idaho.

In addition, he is the current president of the Historic Silver City Foundation and a past president of the City Club of Boise and the Idaho Hemingway House Foundation.

As a well-known Hemingway scholar, Marty has lectured on Hemingway throughout the United States, Spain, and Cuba. He has also been very involved in the preservation of Ernest Hemingway's home in Ketchum, ID and in Cuba.

Although Marty will be retiring from the working world at the end of 2011, we know he will continue serving these and other groups throughout the State. His retirement will give him more time to spend with his wife Barb and their family and especially the grandchildren.

When people ask us what makes Idaho such a great place, we could talk about the beautiful mountains, skiing, whitewater rafting, hunting and fishing, or a myriad of other things. But in reality, it is people such as Marty Peterson who work to make Idaho even better—that is why Idaho is so great.

It is with our sincere thanks and well wishes that Senator CRAPO and I recognize Marty Peterson for his many contributions to the State of Idaho and its people. We wish him a happy and productive retirement.

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ANNIVERSARY OF BELARUS ELECTION

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the coura-

geous men and women who are struggling for freedom in Belarus.

Almost 1 year ago, on December 19, 2010, elections took place in Belarus. At that time, some in the United States and Europe hoped that this vote would be a turning point for Belarus and that its authoritarian ruler, Aleksandr Lukashenko, would finally begin to pursue the political and economic reforms demanded by his people.

In fact, the December 19 election was a turning point for Belarus—but not in the way that some had hoped. It soon became obvious that the election had been egregiously rigged by the regime. In response, thousands of Belarusians from every background peacefully took to the streets in protest. It was the most significant public demonstration the country had seen in over a half decade, and the Lukashenko regime responded with violence.

On that day, Belarusian security forces detained or arrested over 600 peaceful protestors. Hundreds more were surrounded by armored tanks and beaten by thugs dispatched by the regime. The Lukashenko regime arrested seven opposition candidates who participated in the vote, severely beating one candidate. In the year that has followed the election, hundreds of people—including several Presidential candidates—have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms in sham trials that have again revealed Belarus' judicial system to be nothing more than a political tool abused by the regime. It is a system that has institutionalized torture and denies its prisoners access to family, lawyers, medical treatment, and open legal proceedings.

I should note that the peaceful protests that erupted in Belarus 1 year ago took place just 2 days after a 26-year-old man in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid set himself on fire, which in turn sparked a series of peaceful protests that overthrew the long-ruling dictator in that country—starting the Arab Spring. But as the winds of change sweep across north Africa and the Middle East, ousting some of the world's most entrenched regimes, it is important for us to remember that there remains one last dictatorship in Europe; that is, the Lukashenko regime in Belarus.

Despite the extraordinary changes taking place around the world, the Lukashenko regime has sustained, and even intensified, its crackdown against its own people. This is a regime that recently outlawed nearly all forms of public speech and peaceful assembly, including silent protest. It is a regime that, instead of responding to the legitimate demands of its people, has sought to cultivate close ties with other dictatorships, like the regime in Tehran. It is a regime that, according to reports, delivered military equipment to the Qadhafi regime in Libya in February 2011 just as it prepared to slaughter its own people.