

were exchange students from Egypt. As I thought of the situation over in my head repeatedly, I searched for an answer, a positive amidst the sea of disaster and despair, any silver lining that would help me and others feeling the pain of this tragedy pass this deep and dark cloud. Then I realized that, just as there is a lesson in everything, there is something that we all can take away from this unfortunate occurrence.

We can all at some point identify with the loss of a loved one, a friend, or a dear community member. Still, just as we here in the United States grieve over the death of those Americans on Flight 990, we must remember those teenagers returning home and show our support to the Egyptian communities that mourn their deaths as well.

This is an important opportunity for the strength and support from one person to another to transcend ethnic, racial, and national boundaries. This is the time where we must come together across international lines and show our sympathy and compassion as we all share in the unexplainable loss of good and innocent people.

Just as pain knows no color, country, or social class, support, compassion, and comfort should not know the difference between nations, either. Just as we mourn the loss of the Simermeyers and the other passengers on that flight, our hearts and prayers are also with the families and friends of those Egyptians who also perished in this tragedy.

We must seize this opportunity before us and learn the lesson that we must all come together to help each other cope with the results of disaster.

As I close, I feel compelled to focus on the newly developed friendship between a Baltimore teen, Shantell Rose, and Walaa Zeid of Egypt. The two had been inseparable as they lived, studied, shopped, and played together for 2 weeks as a part of the exchange program. At the end of this precious time, Shantell stated that, as they parted, they said, "I love you." In describing this experience, she said that they had started a relationship that will last for decades and cross continents.

I say to Shantell Rose, other students, and to all the loved ones of those that have departed us in this tragedy that the journey of life takes us through many times of happiness and sadness. We remember the happy times as the most loved and enriching experiences of all. Although the sad times do not outwardly appear to benefit us, they are, in reality, what builds strength and character in all of us.

Remember that our relationships will still last decades and the new relationships that Americans and Egyptian families will make will continue across the continents. These relationships will build your strength and character and allow you to say these simple

words: Do not cry for me, for the time we shared will always be.

THE CUBA PROGRAM: TORTURING OF AMERICAN POW'S BY CASTRO AGENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN) for convening tomorrow's hearing on the Committee on International Relations on "The Cuba Program: The Torturing of American POWs by Castro Agents," and for his ongoing leadership and commitment to veterans' issues.

This issue is particularly important to me for various reasons. But, more importantly, as I read through the accounts of what our men and women in uniform have endured through this century of war, I think of my husband, Dexter Lehtinen, who served in the special forces in Vietnam and was injured in combat. He was relatively fortunate, but so many of his colleagues were not.

The Geneva Convention prohibits "violence to life and person, in particular murders of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture" and "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment."

This is exactly what took place in a prison camp in North Vietnam known as "The Zoo," seen here in a declassified photo, the site where 19 of our U.S. military officers were tortured.

During the period of August 1967 to August 1968, 19 of our courageous servicemen were psychologically tortured, some brutally beaten, by interrogators assessed to be Cuban agents working under orders from Hanoi and Havana.

Described by some to be a psychological experiment, the goals of The Cuba Program, as the torture project has been labeled by our Defense Department and by our intelligence agencies, has been described in different ways as an attempt to test interrogation methods, to obtain absolute compliance and submission to captor demands, or ultimately to be used as a propaganda tool by the international Communist effort, as Mike Bengé will elaborate upon during tomorrow's congressional hearing.

Some POWs were tortured and then instructed to write a series of questions and answers given to them by their interrogators. These scripts on most occasions included statements declaring that the United States was waging an illegal, immoral, and unjust war. Prisoners were tortured, again some psychologically and others physically, to ensure cooperation in appearances they were forced to make before visiting dignitaries. Refusal to comply

with the captors' commands usually meant that Fidel, Chico, and Poncho, as the torturers were called by the POWs, would be called in for intense beatings of the prisoners.

The ruthless nature of the interrogators and the severity of their actions led prisoners such as Captain Raymond Vohden, Colonel Jack Bomar, and Lieutenant Carpenter to question how human beings could so brutally batter another human being.

Captain Vohden and Colonel Bomar will offer compelling and detailed testimony to us tomorrow, describing the heinous acts committed against them by Cuban agents at The Zoo, acts which are in direct violation of the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War.

Survivors of The Cuba Program have been eager to identify and trace the Cuban agents who systematically interrogated them and tortured their fellow Americans. Yet, despite their efforts, a successful resolution of this matter has not been achieved. We hope that tomorrow's hearing will be the first of many steps aimed at changing that outcome.

The first is to get leads that could take us closer to an identification of the Cuban torturers.

Our second goal is to provide the basis for an ensuing interagency investigation of the new evidence that has been uncovered, including a search for pertinent data and sources previously unavailable under the Cold War parameters.

We want our State Department, the CIA, the FBI, INS, and the Defense Intelligence Agency to coordinate a comprehensive approach to this case.

Lastly, this hearing will begin to establish the foundation for future action against the torturers. On a broader scale, this investigation will serve to highlight the brutal nature of the Castro regime and the historic and ongoing threat that it poses to the American people.

Ultimately, our hope is that tomorrow's hearing will serve to honor those POWs, and I will show my colleagues a poster that has their picture, 9 of the 19 who were involved in The Cuba Program. We hope that tomorrow's hearing will serve to honor these POWs, who were willing to give life and limb so that we may all be free. We will honor them by finding out the truth about Castro's participation in Vietnam known as The Cuba Program.

CURRENT EVENTS IN AMERICA

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, today in a hearing before the full Committee on Resources we discussed the President's proposal to lock up some 40 million acres of our national forests.