

are out again. Half the people in our prison population are released during the course of a year. Those who think we will put them away and throw away the key ought to take a closer look at the statistics. Half the people in prisons are coming out each year. Who are they when they come out? We know when they went in they were criminals. In the case of addicts, we know they came into prison with the drug addiction which led to a crime, which might have led to a theft or something worse, a violent crime, and they went into prison for the average 9-month incarceration. We also know in my State of Illinois, it is very rare, if ever, that the person in the Illinois prison system has any opportunity for drug rehab while he is in prison. So he comes in an addict and he leaves an addict. In the meantime, though, he has joined some fraternities of gang members and veteran criminals who told him how to be a better criminal when he goes back on the street.

That is very shortsighted. What have we achieved? We have brought an addict in and released an addict 9 months later to go out and commit another crime. We have to look not only to the supply side of the equation and interdiction, but also the demand side: How do we start reducing demand in this country for these drugs so we can have a more peaceful and just society?

I am happy I took the weekend to be in Colombia and to learn first hand some of the things we are facing. I certainly hope my colleagues will avail themselves of an opportunity to learn of things that we should be considering as part of a plan with Colombia and as part of our effort to reduce this narcotics dependence in the United States.

LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am also concerned about another issue which has become very timely. It is related to recent statements by officials in Russia concerning Russia's view of the Baltic countries. I have a personal interest in this. My mother was born in Lithuania, an immigrant to the United States. Over the course of my public career, I have journeyed to the Baltic countries on several occasions and have witnessed the miracle of independence and democracy coming to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. This was something that many of us had prayed for but never believed would happen in our lifetime; that the Soviet empire would come down and that these three countries, which had been subjugated to the Russians and Soviets in the early forties, would have a chance for their own independence and democracy.

In fact, I was able to be there on the day of the first democratic election in Lithuania. My mother was alive at the time, and she and I took great pride

that the Lithuanian people had maintained their courage and dignity throughout the years of Soviet occupation and now would be given a chance to have their own country again.

I have met with the leaders of these countries. I am particularly close to the President of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus. The story of Mr. Adamkus is amazing. He fought the Nazis in World War II and then fought the Soviets and finally decided he had to escape and came to the United States where he went to school and settled in Chicago, became an engineer, went to work for the Environmental Protection Agency, spent a lifetime of civil service, receiving awards from Presidents for his service to our country, and then at the time of his retirement announced that he was going to move back to Lithuania at the age of 70 and run for President. When Mr. Adamkus came to me and suggested that, I thought, well, it is a wonderful dream; surely, it is not going to happen. And he won, much to the surprise of everyone. He is currently the President of Lithuania; he is very popular. He believes, as I do, that the freedom in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia is something that we in the West must carefully guard.

Those of us who for 50 years protested the Soviet takeover of these countries cannot ignore the fact they are still in a very vulnerable position. Not one of these countries has a standing army or anything like a missile arsenal or anything like a national defense. Yet they look across the borders to their neighbors in Russia and Belarus and see very highly armed situations—and in many cases very threatening.

That is why the recent statements by Vladimir Putin, the new President in Russia, are so troubling. According to the Washington Post on June 15, Russian President Vladimir Putin made a statement in which he said that fulfilling the aspirations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania for NATO membership would be a reckless act that removed a key buffer zone and posed a major strategic challenge to Moscow that could, in his words, “destabilize” Europe.

The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on June 9 of this year that claimed that Lithuania's forceable annexation in 1940 was voluntary.

This is an outrageous rewrite of history. The Soviets were legendary for their rewrites. They would rewrite history and decide that they, in fact, had developed an airplane first, an automobile first, all these affirmations, and Stalin was, in fact, a benevolent leader and was not a ruthless dictator. All of these revisions were used to scoff at the West.

We thought that the end of the Russian empire would be the end of revisionist history. Unfortunately, Mr. Putin and his leadership in Moscow are

starting to turn back to the same old ways. By the statements that they have made, they have said, if we went forward with allowing the Baltic States into NATO, it would be an explicit threat to the sovereignty of Russia. And they also go on to say it could destabilize Europe.

Such a threat by the Russian Federation against security in Europe cannot go unchallenged, and that is why I come to the Senate floor today. It is incredible that the Russian President would continue to call the Baltic countries “buffer States” that would presumably have no say in their own security in the future and could once again be subjugated with impunity. To suggest that the Baltic nations are somehow pawns to be moved back and forth across the board by leaders in Russia is totally unacceptable. It is unbelievable that the Russian Foreign Ministry could forget the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop pact that carved up Eastern Europe between Hitler and Stalin, that moment in time when the Nazis and Communists in Russia were in alliance, in league with one another, and through respective foreign ministers basically gave away countries.

At that moment in time, the Baltic States were annexed into the Soviet Union against their will, and for more than 50 years we in the United States protested that. It was the so-called Captive Nations Day we celebrated on Capitol Hill and across America to remember that those Baltic States and so many other countries were brought into the Soviet empire against their will. Somehow, Mr. Putin in this new century is suggesting that we did not understand history; the Baltic nations really wanted to be part of the Soviet Union. That is a ridiculous statement, and it defies history and defies the facts that everyone knows. It is beyond belief that the Russian Foreign Minister would claim that the Red Army troops occupying the Baltic countries in June of 1940 were not the reason that these countries so-called “joined” the Soviet Union. Listen to the statement by the Russian Foreign Minister.

The August 3, 1940 decision of USSR Supreme Soviet to admit Lithuania into the Soviet Union was preceded by corresponding appeals from the highest representative bodies of the Baltic States.

Therefore it would be wrong to interpret Lithuania's admission to the USSR as a result of the latter's unilateral actions. All assertions that Lithuanian was “occupied” and “annexed” by the Soviet Union and related claims of any kind of neglect, political, historical and legal realities therefore are groundless.

This is the statement by the Russian Foreign Minister.

Let me tell you, he not only ignores the history of 1940 which is very clear, but he ignores the fact that in 1991 the Russian Foreign Ministry entered into a treaty with Lithuania in which Russia explicitly admitted that the 1940

Soviet annexation violated Lithuanian sovereignty and that Lithuania, they said, at the time was free to pursue its own security agreements and arrangements. So in 1991, in those enlightened moments as the Soviet empire came down and Russia became a new State with democratic elections, they entered into a treaty with Lithuania and acknowledged the reality that Lithuania was forcibly annexed into the Soviet Union. They said in 1991 Lithuania had the right, as the Baltic States do, to pursue their security arrangements.

Now, when Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia talk about membership in NATO, the Russian Foreign Minister and Russian President Putin come forward and say unacceptably, it would destabilize Europe; it would eliminate the so-called "buffer States." They still view these countries as vassals, as pawns to be used. They will not acknowledge the sovereignty which should be acknowledged of these countries.

These disturbing statements show clearly why the Baltic countries must be admitted to NATO; that is, to show Russia and any neighboring country that it must give up its territorial ambitions against NATO membership for the Baltic countries, and it would make it critically clear that the West would never again accept "buffer State" subjugation of them. The idea that the three tiny Baltic States could threaten the enormous and powerful Russian Federation is laughable. If Russia has no design on the Baltic States, it has nothing to fear from their membership in NATO.

VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have spoken about the drug problems in America and this issue of foreign policy. But there is another issue which is a continuing concern across America. It is the fact that this Senate and Congress have failed to act on the problem in America of gun violence. It has been a little over a year since the Columbine tragedy, but still the leadership in this Congress refuses to enact sensible gun safety legislation.

Most will recall that a little over a year ago, we passed in this Chamber, with the tie breaking vote of Vice President GORE, legislation which would allow us to do background checks on people who buy guns at gun shows. If you go to buy a gun here in America, they are going to ask some questions: Do you have a history of committing a crime; a history of violent mental illness; are you old enough to own a gun? That is part of the Brady law. And with that law, we stopped some 500,000 people from buying guns in America who were, in fact, people with a criminal record or a history of violent and mental illness, or children. We stopped it—half a million of them—

but there is a big loophole there. If you go to the so-called gun shows which we have in Illinois and States such as Texas and all over the country, these gun bazaars and flea markets do not have any background checks. You do not have to be John Dillinger and the greatest criminal mind to understand if you need a gun, do not go to a gun dealer, go to a gun show. No questions are asked; you can buy it on the spot.

We passed a law. We said we have to close this loophole. If we really want to keep guns out of the hands of people who will misuse them, we need a background check at gun shows. That was part of our bill.

The second part of the bill related to a provision with which Senator KOHL from Wisconsin came forward. It said if you sell a handgun in America, it should have a child safety protection device, or so-called trigger lock. You have seen them. They look like little padlocks. You put them over the trigger so if a child gets his hands on a gun, he or she will not be able to pull the trigger and harm anyone.

Is this important? It is critically important. We read every day in the newspapers about kids being harmed, killing their playmates, and terrible things occurring when they find a handgun. It is naive for any gun owner to believe if they have a gun in the house, they can successfully hide a gun. Children are always going to find Christmas gifts and guns. We have to acknowledge that as parents. If they find Christmas gifts, it is disappointing. If they find guns, it can be tragic.

Those who say they will not have a gun in their house if they have little kids may not have peace of mind if they know their playmates' parents own guns and do not have a trigger lock on them.

We said as a matter of standard safety in America, we want every handgun to be sold with a trigger lock. Is it an inconvenience for the gun owner? Yes, let's concede that fact. Do we face inconveniences every day bringing safety to our country and to our lives? Of course we do. Have you gone through an airport lately? Did you have to put that purse or that briefcase on the conveyor belt? Did you go through the metal detector? It is inconvenient, isn't it? It slowed you down, didn't it? We all do it because we do not want terrorists on airplanes and we want to fly safely.

So the idea of a trigger lock on a handgun I do not believe is a major obstacle to gun ownership or using a gun safely and legally. That was the second part of the bill that passed and went over to the House of Representatives.

The third part is one that is hardly arguable, and that is, we ban the domestic manufacture of high-capacity ammunition clips in this country, clips that can hold up to 100 or more bullets.

The belief was nobody needed them. The only people who would need those would be the military or police. The average person has no need for them.

I said time and again that if a person needs an assault weapon or some sort of automatic weapon with a 100-round clip to shoot a deer, they ought to stick to fishing. Sadly, there are people who found if you could not manufacture these high-capacity ammo clips in the United States, you could import them from overseas. The third part of our gun safety legislation said we are going to stop the importation of high-capacity ammo clips which are designed to kill people. They have nothing to do with legitimate sports or hunting.

Three provisions: Background checks at gun shows, trigger locks on handguns when they are sold, and no more importation of high-capacity ammo clips. Do those sound like radical ideas to you? They do not to me. They sound like a commonsense effort to keep guns out of the hands of people who would misuse them.

We barely passed the bill. The National Rifle Association, the gun lobby, opposed it. The bill received 49 votes for, 49 votes against. Vice President AL GORE sat in that chair, as he is entitled under the Constitution, and cast the tie-breaking vote—50-49. The bill went to the House of Representatives—this is after Columbine—and with all this determination, we said: We are finally going to do something to respond to gun violence.

Of course, when it went over to the House of Representatives, the gun lobby, the National Rifle Association, piled it on, and the bill was decimated. There is nothing in it that looks like what I described. Then it went to conference. We are supposed to work out differences between the House and the Senate in conference. They have sat on it for a year, and every day in America, 12 or 13 children are killed by guns. The same number of kids who died at Columbine die each day, not in one place but all across America. They are kids who commit suicide. They are kids who are gang bangers shooting up innocent people. They are kids who are playing with their playmates.

The gun tragedy continues in America, and this Congress refuses to do anything. Many of us come to the floor of the Senate on a regular basis as a reminder to our colleagues in Congress that this issue will not go away because gun violence is not going away, and we need to do something to make America safer.

Since Columbine, thousands of Americans have been killed by gunfire. Until we act, the Democratic leadership in the Senate who supports this gun safety legislation will read some names into the RECORD of those who lost their lives to gun violence in the past year and will continue to do so every day