

based on the serious implications for homeland security alone.”

What this military report by our military says is the Mexican government could be on the verge of collapse because of the drug cartels. It should concern us that our neighbors to the south are having this problem. It's important to America that there be a stable government in Mexico and that we get a grip on the drug cartels and not wait for crimes to be committed in the United States, but immediately send our military to the United States-Mexico border so we can take care of those drug dealers that come into the United States.

A border sheriff once told me that the drug cartels that come into the country, have more money, have better equipment and more people than he has to fight them off. Now is the time to be prepared and send our military there to protect the integrity of the United States border.

It's important that we help Mexico, but, Mr. Speaker, I am not one that favors giving blanket checks to Mexico as we have done in the Merida Initiative, \$1.5 billion we have sent down there in equipment and money. Unfortunately, it may happen that that equipment be used by the drug cartels against our border protectors. It's important that we reinforce this side of the United States border and be prepared for any action of the drug cartels that come across the border from Mexico and figure out other ways to help Mexico.

Border security is the number one issue in this country. It is time to secure our borders. The fight has already begun. We have to be engaged in this and protect the people of this country from the drug cartels.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. EDWARDS of Maryland addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING JOURNALIST LASANTHA WICKRAMATUNGA

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, in 2006 I cofounded the Congressional Caucus for Freedom of the Press, and since then this bipartisan, bicameral caucus has sought to highlight the importance of free expression around the world. I rise today to honor Lasantha Wickramatunga, a brave journalist who was gunned down while driving to work in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo.

Threats, attacks and murders of journalists are becoming all too common in

Sri Lanka. Mr. Wickramatunga knew the dangers too well but courageously continued reporting. Recognizing his work might cost him his life, Mr. Wickramatunga wrote a letter to be published in the event of his assassination.

Today I will read excerpts of his letter which was published by his paper, The Sunday Leader, on January 11, 3 days after he was killed.

He wrote, “No other profession calls on its practitioners to lay down their lives for their art save the armed forces and, in Sri Lanka, journalism. In the course of the past few years, the independent media have increasingly come under attack. Electronic and print media institutions have been burnt, bombed, sealed and coerced. Countless journalists have been harassed, threatened and killed. It has been my honor to belong to all those categories and now especially the last.

“Why then do we do it? I often wonder that. After all, I too am a husband, and the father of three wonderful children. I too have responsibilities and obligations that transcend my profession, be it the law or journalism.

“But there is a calling that is yet above high office, fame, lucre and security. It is the call of conscience.

“The Sunday Leader has been a controversial newspaper because we say it like we see it: whether it be a spade, a thief or a murderer, we call it by that name. We do not hide behind euphemism. The investigative articles we print are supported by documentary evidence thanks to the public-spiritedness of citizens who at great risk to themselves pass on this material to us. We have exposed scandal after scandal, and never once in these 15 years has anyone proved us wrong or successfully prosecuted us.

“The free media serve as a mirror in which the public can see itself, sans mascara and styling gel. From us you learn the state of your nation, and especially its management by the people you elected to give your children a better future. Sometimes the image you see in that mirror is not a pleasant one. But while you may grumble in the privacy your armchair, the journalists who hold the mirror up to you do so publicly and at great risk to themselves. That is our calling, and we do not shirk it.

“If I seem angry and frustrated, it is because most of my countrymen—and all of the government—cannot see this writing plainly on the wall.

“It is well known that on two occasions I was brutally assaulted, while on another my house was sprayed with machine-gun fire. Despite the government's sanctimonious assurances, there was never a serious police inquiry into the perpetrators of these attacks, and the attackers were never apprehended. In all these cases, I have reason to believe the attacks were inspired by the government. When finally I am killed, it will be the government that kills me.

“As for me, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I walk tall and bowed to no man. And I have not traveled this journey alone. Fellow journalists in other branches of the media walked with me: most of them are now dead, imprisoned without trial or exiled in far-off lands.

“As for the readers of The Sunday Leader, what can I say but Thank You for supporting our mission. We have espoused unpopular causes, stood up for those too feeble to stand up for themselves, locked horns with the high and mighty so swollen with power that they have forgotten their roots, exposed corruption and waste of your hard-earned tax rupees, and make sure that whatever the propaganda of the day, you were allowed to hear a contrary view. For this I—and my family—have now paid the price that I have long known I will one day have to pay. I am—and have always been—ready for that. I have done nothing to prevent this outcome: no security, no precautions. I want my murderer to know that I am not a coward like he is, hiding behind human shields while condemning thousands of innocents to death.

“That The Sunday Leader will continue fighting the good fight, too, is written. For I did not fight this alone. Many more of us have to be—and will be—killed before The Leader is laid to rest. I hope my assassination will be seen not as a defeat of freedom but an inspiration for those who survive to step up their efforts. Indeed, I hope that it will help galvanize forces that will usher in a new era of human liberty in our beloved motherland. I also hope it will open the eyes of your President to the fact that however many are slaughtered in the name of patriotism, the human spirit will endure and flourish. Not all the Rajapakses combined can kill that.

“People often ask me why I take such risks and tell me it is a matter of time before I am bumped off. Of course I know that: it is inevitable. But if we do not speak out now, there will be no one left to speak for those who cannot, whether they be ethnic minorities, the disadvantaged or the persecuted.”

These were the words he wrote in anticipation of his own assassination.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the entire text of his letter for the RECORD.

The following editorial by Lasantha Wickramatunga, was published in The Sunday Leader on January 11.

No other profession calls on its practitioners to lay down their lives for their art save the armed forces and, in Sri Lanka, journalism. In the course of the past few years, the independent media have increasingly come under attack. Electronic and print-media institutions have been burnt, bombed, sealed and coerced. Countless journalists have been harassed, threatened and killed. It has been my honour to belong to all those categories and now especially the last.

I have been in the business of journalism a good long time. Indeed, 2009 will be The Sunday Leader's 15th year. Many things have changed in Sri Lanka during that time, and