Mr. Speaker, we absolutely cannot and should not tolerate any form of hate. I am glad that the good people of Jasper, who as well abhor this terrible crime, have asked for America's prayers. Violence motivated by a bias against a person's personal characteristic represents a serious threat to all communities. Experts estimate that a bias-related crime is committed every 14 minutes.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I call on the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Attorney General Janet Reno to conduct a full investigation into this heinous crime. Let us join together as Americans to say now is the time to cease and desist these horrible incidents across our country.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my disbelief over a horrendous crime that occurred in Jasper, Texas that is now being called one of the most vicious racial crimes in modern Texas history.

I would like to send my deepest condolences to the family of James Byrd, Jr. This family is now dealing with the harsh realities of Hate Crime in America.

Three men, who are alleged to be connected with white supremacy groups, have been charged with murdering a black man by chaining him to a pickup truck and dragging him almost three miles on a winding road through the woods of East Texas.

Along the way, the victims head and right arm were ripped from his mangled body.

This murder painfully illustrates the racial hatred that still exists in our society today. We absolutely can not and should not tolerate any form of hate.

Violence motivated by a bias against a victim's personal characteristic represents a serious threat to all communities.

Experts estimate that a bias-related crime is committed every 14 minutes, a statistic that highlights a pervasive problem warranting immediate action.

Last year in my home state of Texas, 72 percent of the hate crimes reported in the state were fueled by racial or ethnic hatred.

Today, I call on the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Attorney General Janet Reno to conduct a full investigation into this heinous crime.

And I hope the public outrage surrounding this murder will motivate the federal authorities to strengthen federal hate crime legislation to help bring about an end to these crimes in America.

Hate Crimes must be afforded special attention because we have a compelling interest in protecting our communities from bigotry and violence. Hate violence is not only a crime against an individual, but an assault against an entire group of people. It affects all of us.

The consequences of hate crimes reach far beyond the harm inflicted on an individual victim, they polarize citizens and exacerbate tension in a diverse community. Of the 7,947 hate crime incidents reported to the FBI in 1995, sixty percent—4,831—were motivated by race. Of these, 2,988 were anti-black.

The greatest number of hate crimes of any kind are perpetrated against African-Americans. Anti-black violence has been and still remains the prototypical hate crime.

Hate crimes against African-Americans have a profound impact on the entire society not only for the hurt they cause but for the history they recall.

It is my hope that the perpetrators of this crime receive a quick and speedy trial and that justice, in this case, is both swift and deliberate. These criminals should never walk the streets as free men again.

For the sake of the Byrd family and all Americans of all races, I urge Congress to act in a timely manner to address this issue to bring about racial harmony so every American can walk the streets without fear.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

INDEPENDENT COUNSEL'S ''INTERIM'' REPORT WOULD BE A MISTAKE

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

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I take the floor today to join many of my Democratic and Republican colleagues in voicing concerns about reports that the Office of the Independent Counsel, headed by Mr. Starr, is considering sending an interim report to the House concerning his investigation.

□ 1745

Just this week, the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, as well as several other Republican Members, including the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. LIVINGSTON) and the distinguished Senator of the Senate Judiciary Committee, ORRIN HATCH, have addressed themselves to this topic and have expressed serious reservations about the wisdom and propriety of any referral to Congress that is incomplete or unfinished.

I agree with these Members of the majority as well as several of my Democratic colleagues on the Committee on the Judiciary, including the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER) that if such a partial report were actually to be delivered prior to Mr. Starr's having completed his investigation, it could only be viewed as a partisan act intended to influence this fall's election. How else could it be viewed?

The independent counsel has already sacrificed some of his credibility through his insensitivity to the many conflicts of interest, some real, some apparent, under which he has labored. The referral to Congress of an incomplete report would likely exhaust whatever remaining patience the public has for Mr. Starr's activities.

Mr. Starr has previously acknowledged in one of his many interviews with the press that his duty is to uncover all the evidence, both the evidence that may tend to establish that crimes may have occurred and the evidence that would tend to suggest that allegations of wrongdoing are unfounded.

It is quite obvious that Mr. Starr has not yet completed his investigation. Until he does so, simple fairness dictates that any report to the House must not precede the long-awaited conclusion of the investigation.

When we passed the Independent Counsel Act, we gave the independent counsel a great deal of power to conduct investigations as he sees fit. Some think too much power. The very breadth of the investigative powers granted to Mr. Starr at the very least entitle a Congress to the fruits of a complete investigation. The statements issuing from the Office of Independent Counsel about the possibility of an interim report are simply irresponsible. After 4 years and $40 million, we are entitled to a complete report on the findings of Mr. Starr's investigation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CONYERS. I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me briefly thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) for his statement but as well he has raised some very important issues. I join with the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and the leaders of the Republican Party to acknowledge that an interim report would not do us justice in this House. We want to make sure that we have a full report.

With respect to the independent counsel statute, I think that we are now seeing how many issues it raises, how many questions the American people are even raising as I travel about who have asked me, ''Why is Mr. Starr continuing this type of investigation?'' I think it draws question to what we do in 1999 on the assessment of the independent counsel statute.

We want full and open investigations, we want a better government, a proper government, an appropriate government. But I think even a suggestion of an interim report will not do justice to the House Committee on the Judiciary in the need for a full review of any report that Mr. Starr may have. I hope he listens to our calling for a full report so that we can do the business of this House in the right and proper manner.

Mr. CONYERS. I thank the gentlewoman for her comments.

TRIBUTE TO THE PEOPLE OF SPENCER, SOUTH DAKOTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments here today to publicly commend the people of South Dakota for their courage, their bravery and their generosity in the face of disaster.

On the evening of Saturday, May 30, 1998, a tornado struck the small town of Spencer, South Dakota. When the storm passed, a handful of buildings remained standing on the far edge of town. Otherwise, the entire city of 322 people was gone. Six people were killed and 150 were injured.

It was a difficult time, not just for the people of Spencer but for those in surrounding communities as well. The residents who lost their lives in the storm were elderly people who had lived in or near the community their entire lives. They were the fixtures of the community, the local historians. Now they and part of our prairie history are gone.

Many of the other residents of Spencer had spent their entire lives there as well. They woke up every morning in the same house, said good morning to the same neighbors, went to work at the same business, came home again to the same house, day after day for most of their lives. So imagine what it would be like to suddenly emerge from what is left of the concrete pit that was your basement to find that it is not there anymore. None of it is there anymore. The house is gone, the car is gone, the streets are gone, the business is gone, the neighbors are gone. Poof. Gone with the wind.

That is what life is like today for the residents of Spencer, South Dakota. It is a terrible adjustment, and many are not sure what the future holds or how to begin building a new future without a home or a hometown.

But here is where my pride in the people of South Dakota begins. The call went out for volunteers to help clean up the ravaged city. Governor Bill Janklow asked for a thousand people to show up. Guess how many he ended up with. Eight times that amount. Eight thousand people showed up to pick through piles of rock and debris in search of torn wedding pictures and beat up toys. Eight thousand people.

They ran out of food. The call went out for more. It arrived. People brought pizzas, they brought soft drinks, they brought sandwiches. They did not exactly start with five loaves and two fishes, but through the miracle of generosity that food multiplied to feed 8,000 hungry volunteers. I am told that by the end of the day, they had 16,000 meals before it was done.

Those who could not show up in person found other ways to help. A local television station held a telethon to raise money. They collected more than $600,000 for the disaster victims. When the phone lines got busy, people jumped into their cars and started dropping the money off at the station in person. The response was nothing short of overwhelming.

The volunteers are not the only ones who came through when the call went out. I would like to commend all the fine people who work for the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the job that they do in responding immediately, thoroughly and professionally when disaster strikes. I know the people of Spencer are grateful for their help.

As with any crisis, heroes emerge from the wreckage to remind us that we still have heroes walking among us, real heroes of the common, sturdy and lasting type. The kind of heroes that do not earn millions or play basketball or football or disappoint us later on.

Rocky Kirby is one of those heroes. He is the mayor of Spencer. He says his most difficult decision prior to the storm was deciding whether or not to pave the streets. Now he faces the daunting job of steering what is left of his community through the difficult months ahead. He is doing it because it is his duty to his town and his neighbors. He certainly is not doing it for the money. As mayor he draws a salary of $30 a month.

Donna Ruden is another ordinary person who has shown extraordinary courage. Her home was one of the few in town left standing, so she has turned her one home into a one-building Main Street. Her home now serves as the town bank, the insurance office and city hall. She is running all three from her home, grateful to have a place to live. She wants to help her neighbors who do not.

We hear so often in this country about the bad, Mr. Speaker, about kids shooting kids and neighbors robbing from neighbors, about crimes and drugs and hate and violence. I want to tell my colleagues today that the core of what is good in this country and the core of what is good in human beings is still alive and well in a little town called Spencer, South Dakota. We as a Nation can all be proud of what we have witnessed there. I know I certainly am.

NAGORNO KARABAGH PEACE PROCESS

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 share with my colleagues and the American people some new ideas on how we can work to promote greater cooperation and stability in the Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union, and specifically how we can jump-start the peace process in Nagorno Karabagh. During the Memorial Day recess, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY) and I had the opportunity to travel to the Republics of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh to meet with government officials from both countries as well as with U.S. officials in the region.

As I have mentioned in the House on several occasions, the people of Nagorno Karabagh fought and won a war of independence against Azerbaijan. A tenuous cease-fire has been in place since 1994, but a more lasting settlement has been elusive. The U.S. has been involved in a major way in the negotiations intended to produce a just and lasting peace. Our country is a co-chair, along with France and Russia, of the international negotiating group, commonly known as the Minsk Group, formed to seek a solution to the Nagorno Karabagh conflict.

Mr. Speaker, this so-called Minsk process, under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, a process of shuttle diplomacy whereby the American and other negotiators travel between the various capitals seeking agreement on a resolution of the conflict, has so far not been successful in trying to resolve the Nagorno Karabagh conflict. What is needed are some new ideas and more realistic approaches that will lead to a just and lasting settlement of this conflict.

Unfortunately, the U.S. position has thus far sided with Azerbaijan's claim of so-called territorial integrity, despite the fact that this land has been Armenian land for centuries, and the borders which gave the land to Azerbaijan were imposed by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

It is time, Mr. Speaker, for the U.S. and our Minsk Group partners to forget about the idea of territorial integrity as the foundation for peacefully resolving this conflict. In addition, we should be pushing for direct negotiations involving Nagorno Karabagh and Azerbaijan.

Instead of sticking with the unworkable notion of Karabagh as an inseparable part of Azerbaijan, subordinate to the Azeri capital of Baku, I believe we should consider the idea of horizontal links, a federation among equals. This model has been used in resolving the Bosnia war and in the current negotiations aimed at resolving the Cyprus conflict.

I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, some positive changes in the position of our State Department, including their apparent willingness to push for direct negotiations between Nagorno Karabagh and Azerbaijan. I am sensing a newfound flexibility by the State Department in terms of dropping the old adherence to the failed approaches of the Minsk Group in the past.

I would stress the importance of strengthening the current, shaky cease-fire as a priority for the Minsk Group. The recent negotiations in Northern Ireland could provide a model where separate, direct negotiations were held on the issue of militia armaments. In the case of Karabagh, making a priority of securing the cease-fire would help end the violence, stop the continuing casualties and help build confidence for additional agreements between the parties.

The other key is the need for ironclad security guarantees for Karabagh,