

HONORING SHERIFF JIM THOMAS

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 1999

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Sheriff Jim Thomas of Santa Barbara County who was the recipient of the "Guardian of Youth Award" by the Goleta Valley Youth Sports Center. Sheriff Thomas has recently been chosen for this prestigious award because he represents the finest of a community of citizens that has dedicated itself to the future of our youth.

Sheriff Thomas' commitment and service to youth is vast. He has given much of his own time and energy to the Drug Abuse Resistance Program—DARE—by speaking to students about the negative aspects of drug and alcohol abuse. In addition, his administration has devoted five full time deputy sheriffs who spend time on-campus and in school classrooms educating young people about substance abuse, violence, and self-worth. Under his leadership, DARE has reached more than 20,000 elementary and junior high students.

Sheriff Thomas has also committed hundreds of thousands of dollars of confiscated illegal drug money to fund school resource officers, and to support girls' and boys' sports programs, kids camp, and youth scholarship programs. Clearly, Sheriff Thomas' legacy reaches to countless youth and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the George "Ben" Page Memorial Youth Center and the Youth Sports Association for their commitment to the fitness and wellness of our children. I believe that the value of the Youth Center is far greater than an extraordinary building—it contains the generosity of spirit of the Association and Santa Barbara County. Most importantly, the Association and its volunteers will positively impact children today and for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I was honored to join my community this past weekend to pay tribute to Sheriff Jim Thomas. He is a man who has served with unparalleled dedication and compassion. I commend him for years of service to the County of Santa Barbara and to our nation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VITO FOSSELLA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 1999

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I am not recorded on rollcall No. 265 for the Y2K Readiness and Responsibility Act; 191 for the motion to go to conference on the fiscal year 2000 National Defense Authorization Act; and rollcall No. 276 for the Financial Services Act. I was visiting the U.S. troops in Macedonia and could not vote for this legislation. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" for both bills and the motion to go to conference.

AMERICAN EMBASSY SECURITY
ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. ANTHONY D. WEINER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 19, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2415) to enhance security of United States missions and personnel overseas, to authorize appropriations for the Department of State for fiscal year 2000, and for other purposes:

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Chairman, in 1998, when a terrorist bomb exploded in front of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, one of the first humanitarian organizations to arrive at the scene was the Magen David Adom.

Magen David Adom, or MDA, entered the collapsed embassy building at great personal risk and saved dozens of lives. They demonstrated why they are considered to be one of the world's finest humanitarian organizations.

Despite the bravery and competence which the MDA rescuers exhibited that day and every day since its founding in 1930, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has refused to recognize the MDA as a fully participating member. The sole reason for this refusal is because the MDA's symbol is a Red Star, not the Red Cross or Red Crescent, the only symbols recognized by the International Federation.

In 1864, when the nations of the world signed a treaty to provide protection for hospitals, medical personnel and patients in time of war, it was decided that the universal symbol for humanitarian services would be the Swiss flag with its colors reversed.

In Turkey, a predominantly Muslim country, the Red Cross was considered a symbol of Christianity, and inappropriate for use as their humanitarian symbol. Instead, they declared that they would use a Red Crescent, a symbol derived from Islam. This was a reasonable request and the Red Crescent was recognized by the International Federation in 1868.

Yet, in 1949, when Israel asked for recognition of its humanitarian symbol, a red star on a white field, based on the ancient symbol of the Jewish faith, the International Federation refused, insisting that Israel either adopt the cross of Christianity or the crescent of the Muslim faith. The Israeli government refused.

Since that date, though it has worked in partnership with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the MDA is still denied full membership in the International Federation. This has gone on too long.

This October, the International Federation will hold its 27th meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. This amendment directs the President to work with the signatories of the Geneva Convention and support a resolution at the International Conference to allow for the MDA to become a full member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

DEVELOPMENTS IN BELARUS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 1999

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today marks the expiration of the term of office of authoritarian Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka under the 1994 Belarusian Constitution. To nobody's surprise, Mr. Lukashenka is not abandoning his office, having extended his term of office until 2001 using the vehicle of an illegitimate 1996 constitutional referendum.

Since Lukashenka was elected five years ago, Belarus has witnessed nothing but backsliding in the realm of human rights and democracy and a deterioration of the economic situation. The Belarusian Government continues to violate its commitments under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) relating to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. At the root of these violations lies the excessive power usurped by President Lukashenka since his election in 1994, especially following the illegitimate 1996 constitutional referendum, when he disbanded the Supreme Soviet and created a new legislature subordinate to his rule.

Freedoms of expression, association and assembly remain curtailed. The government hampers freedom of the media by tightly controlling the use of national TV and radio. Administrative and economic measures are used to cripple the independent media and NGOs. Political opposition has been targeted for repression, including imprisonment, detention, fines and harassment. The independence of the judiciary has been further eroded, and the President alone controls judicial appointments. Legislative power is decidedly concentrated in the executive branch of government.

The Helsinki Commission, which I Chair, has extensively monitored and reported on the sad situation in Belarus, and has attempted to encourage positive change in that country through direct contacts with Belarusian officials as well as through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meeting in St. Petersburg earlier this month overwhelmingly supported a resolution encouraging democratic change in Belarus, including the conduct of free and fair elections next year. As Chairman of the U.S. delegation to the OSCE PA, I urged my fellow parliamentarians to join me in calling for the release of ex-Prime Minister Mikhail Chygir and the guarantee of free access to the media by opposition groups. In addition, I joined 125 delegates representing 37 of the 54 participating States in signing a statement which offered more harsh criticism of the political situation in Belarus, condemned the use of violence against Supreme Soviet members and representatives of the democratic opposition, and protested their detention.

Within the last few days, there appears to be some glimmer of hope in the gloomy Belarusian predicament. According to a July 17 joint statement by the OSCE PA ad hoc Working Group on Belarus and the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group (AMG) in Belarus: "The Belarusian President states his commitment to the holding of free, fair and recognizable parliamentary elections in