

Mr. Speaker, our visit with the refugee orphans was both heart-wrenching and a delight. It was a delight to see these young children and to hear the songs they sang to us, but it was heart-wrenching to hear the amount of tragedy in these young lives. One group of four children, the oldest was 12, had lost their father; their mother could not take care of them so she brought them to the orphanage. An eight-year-old boy, who could not smile, had lost both parents, was then trafficked across the border to Thailand, somehow escaped from his "owners," and reached the safety of the refugee camps. It is heart-breaking to know that many of the young children, including the orphans, in the refugee camps had watched family or community members being killed by the SPDC, wounded or killed by landmine explosions, raped, or even burned alive.

The drug problem in Southeast Asia can largely be traced back to the SPDC regime in Burma. The military runs, controls and earns the profits off the drug trade of a reported 1 billion plus methamphetamine pills per year. These drugs have had a huge impact on the young people of the region, so it is vital that we work even more closely with the Thai government in fighting against the drug trade controlled by the Burmese military. There are reports of the SPDC forcing its soldiers to take drugs before attacking ethnic groups—captured SPDC military personnel sometimes have difficulty remembering what took place during an attack.

Mr. Speaker, it is vital that those responsible for the genocide of the ethnic groups in Burma be held to account. The reports of atrocities are reminiscent of the Nazis, their blatant disregard for human life and their policies of extermination. The ethnic cleansing of Burma is an international tragedy and I call on the international community to send monitors to Burma, to pursue prosecution of those responsible for these crimes against humanity, to press for the immediate end to deportation of democracy groups back to certain death in Burma, to press strongly for the recognition of the democratically elected government of Burma, and to send international peacekeepers to Burma. I call on the United States government to assist the refugees in Thailand, to increase pressure on the military regime in Burma and those nations that assist the junta, and to further assist the democracy and humanitarian organizations focusing on assistance to the people of Burma. One practical way we can assist the refugees is by offering scholarship opportunities for the refugee students to study abroad—the refugees currently have no legal means to continue their education past middle or high school.

While in Thailand, we also met with organizations assisting women and children, often ethnic minorities from Burma, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, who are victims of trafficking. Many of these victims end up as such due to lack of educational and economic opportunities or lack of citizenship rights in their countries. Organizations, such as the New Life Center, provide counseling, health and medical advice and treatment, education and job skills opportunities—many of those at risk for being trafficked, after the assistance provided by NGOS, return to their communities to help educate women and children about trafficking, health, and other issues.

Our meetings with Thai officials in Bangkok with the National Security Council, the Foreign

Ministry and Members of the Thai Parliament were helpful and I look forward to working with these officials to resolve some of the issues we discussed, particularly the current concerns about forced repatriation of democracy and humanitarian groups working on Burma issues and the certain death they would face if deported back to Burma.

Our delegation then traveled to Laos to meet with government officials and some church leaders regarding various human rights concerns and other issues. Laos is one of the poorest countries in the world and one of only four nations in the world (Laos, Cuba, North Korea and Serbia-Montenegro) that do not have Normal Trade Relations (NTR) status with the U.S. Religious freedom issues have been a major concern in Laos, but reports from various organizations and officials suggest that the problem is slowly being addressed and there has been progress. We met with officials from the Foreign Ministry, the National Assembly, the Lao Front for National Construction and, the Women's Union, and NGO representatives. The openness and frankness of our discussions with officials in Laos was greatly encouraging as was their desire to improve the development of their country. There is much poverty in Laos and after discussions with Laotian officials, U.S. government officials, and some NGOS, it was clear that it is important that the United States extend Normal Trade Relations (NTR) status to Laos. Countries, such as Saudi Arabia, with horrendous human rights records do have NTR; though there is more progress needed, the government of Laos allows people of faith to worship, is working to help end trafficking in persons, has cooperated on missing persons issues, and desires to work for the development of opportunities for women and the poor. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the extension of NTR to Laos.

The delegation traveled on to Vietnam to meet with government officials and representatives of a Buddhist organization and a Christian organization. In all meetings, the same issues were raised, and it was clear that the Central Party had a strong hold over the country. We had a very helpful meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we look forward to interacting with them on a number of issues. In addition we met with the Government Board for Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs and plan to raise cases of religious persecution and trafficking with them. Prior to our visit, the Central Party had its Seventh Annual Plenum meeting, of which a major discussion point was religion. Unfortunately, a key directive from that meeting, referred to in a news report from the South China Morning Post, calls for religious people to be patriotic by "'volunteering' in the struggle to 'foil all attempts of hostile forces who abuse religious and ethnic minority issues to sabotage national unity and act against [the] political regime.'" This most likely means further attempts at control of religious groups in Vietnam. Recent reports by a number of reliable organizations reveal increasing harassment, persecution and imprisonment of religious believers. We hope that the relationships we formed with Vietnamese officials during our visit will help resolve some of the current religious cases.

In addition, during our visit to Hanoi we had the privilege of visiting the Hanoi Hilton, the notorious prison where members of our armed

services were held during the Vietnam War and where Vietnamese citizens previously were imprisoned by the French military. The glass shards on the walls, the placards of personal stories, the stocks where prisoners were unable to move, the isolation cells and the torture devices were sobering reminders of the suffering of many people in Vietnam.

Mr. Speaker, I had an excellent visit to Southeast Asia and I hope to return soon. I would like to commend the US Embassy officials in Thailand, Laos and Vietnam for their extraordinary work and assistance on this visit; it would not have been as successful without them.

I urge my colleagues to join me in pressing for freedom for the people of Burma, continuing to strengthen our relationship with our close friends in Thailand, and furthering the relationship between our nation and the peoples of Laos and Vietnam.

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#### RECOGNIZING BILLY D. COLE

#### HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 5, 2003*

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Billy D. Cole on this, his 50th year in local banking.

Mr. Cole began his banking career on his 18th birthday, March 2, 1953. He found his first job at the former Empire Trust Company where he worked for Fairleigh Enright as a teller-trainee. Since then, he has served as an officer or director of over 40 banks and ten bank holding companies throughout Missouri and Kansas. Today, Mr. Cole serves as the vice-chairman of the board of Nodaway Valley Bank in Missouri.

Mr. Cole truly has worked hard during his years of service and ultimately has become one of the regions well-known and most respected bankers.

Mr. Speaker, today I proudly ask you to join me in commending Billy D. Cole for his accomplishments and dedication on the anniversary of his 50th year in banking.

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#### ON THE RETIREMENT OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY PHILLIP ROLLINS

#### HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 5, 2003*

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to pay tribute to Phillip A. Rollins, who stepped down from office this year after serving for 32 years as a District Attorney in Massachusetts.

Since Phil is too modest to draw attention to his own accomplishments, I want to take this moment to share with you some highlights of his distinguished career in public service. Phil started in Cape Cod politics in the 1960s, serving in local government as a Selectman in the Town of Mashpee. He then ran and won a contested race against a longtime District Attorney, representing the Southern District of Massachusetts. From the start, Phil realized that the issues and problems facing the communities on Cape Cod and the Islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard were so unique