

Indonesia, Thailand—led by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra—seemed keen on letting the wind out of sanction sails at every opportunity. This strikes me as odd behavior given Thailand's processed commitment to democracy and human rights.

Where others speak out to demand concrete actions from the SPDC, including the unconditional and immediate release of Suu Kyi and her compatriots, Thaksin has repeatedly risen to defend those who Secretary Powell referred to as "murderous thugs".

Last year, he initiated an international forum on Burma self-dubbed the "Bangkok Process" that did not include the NLD, the United States, or other proven champions of freedom. However, it did include the SPDC, and was described the Thaksin as a meeting of the "like minded." The "Bangkok Process" is fundamentally flawed by the very absence of Suu Kyi and her supporters at the table. Tellingly, they remain under arrest and detention in Burma.

I agree with Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen that "all voices in the country had to be heard and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi must be released." In stark contrast, Thaksin recently stated, "Burma is on the right track. . . . If they follow our recommendations, they will be okay and get everything done."

With narcotics, HIV/AIDS and other undesirable exports pouring across Burma's borders into Thailand, it is only fair to question Thaksin's motivations in his cozy relationship with the SPDC. Some suspect that the *raison d'être* can be summed up in a single word: iPSTAR.

iPSTAR is a \$350 million broadband satellite owned by Shin Satellite, Sattel, and Shin Corporation, a holding company created by the Prime Minister that owns 53 percent of Sattel. If successfully launched and operational, the satellite will beam its signal across Asia.

To convince doubting Thomases who suspect that Thailand's approach to Burma may be based on selfish profit—not principle—Thaksin should answer the following single question:

What investments, including projects and activities related to iPSTAR, do Shin Satellite and Shin Corporation have in Burma, and/or have planned for Burma?

I intend to pose this same question to Secretary of State Colin Powell when he appears before the Foreign Operations Subcommittee next month.

Let me close by saying that many of us remain concerned with the continued deterioration of democratic institutions in Thailand—including a free and independent press. We are alarmed and distressed by continued reports of the deportation of as many as 10,000 Burmese refugees, exiles, and migrant workers from Thailand to Burma each month. My colleagues can find additional information on this matter in a February 25th article by Ellen

Nakashima in the Washington Post and through Human Rights Watch's report "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Thai Policy Toward Burmese Refugees and Migrants."

With rising tensions in the south, it is more important that ever that Thailand stay the course in its political and legal development.

I am sure my colleagues will agree that accountability and transparency must be maintained in Thailand, be it a crackdown on drugs or business with Burma. As the last few weeks have clearly demonstrated, Thai politicians are quick to promise a chicken in every pot—but sometimes chickens get the flu. I say this only to illustrate my hopes that Prime Minister Thaksin has prepared an alternative approach toward Burma and the SPDC that includes the full participation and input of Suu Kyi and the NLD as well as all ethnic nationalities.

I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks an article from Thailand's English language newspaper *The Nation* be printed in the RECORD. Thaksin has it wrong—the United States is not a "useless friend" to Thailand. On the contrary, America is a strong advocate of democracy and human rights throughout the region.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From *The Nation*, Feb. 28, 2004]

REACTION TO US RIGHTS REPORT: "YOU'RE A USELESS FRIEND"

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra yesterday slammed the United States as a "useless friend" for issuing a damning report on the deterioration of human rights here. "It's unacceptable to me the way the US came out with the report by citing media reports. What kind of friend are they?" a fuming Thaksin said. "Once every year, the US comes out and damages the reputation of its friend. What would they do if Thailand issued the same [kind of] report?" Thaksin told reporters that although Thailand has been in discussions with the US on the human rights situation here the US produced a report that differed from the information Thailand supplied.

The US State Department yesterday released its annual country-by-country review of human rights. Thailand's record "worsened" last year as a result of the extra-judicial killings and arbitrary arrests during the first round of the war on drugs, from February to April, the report said. "I have to say bluntly that it [the US report] really annoyed me. I have asked the Foreign Ministry to issue a statement," Thaksin said.

The Foreign Ministry "invited" US Ambassador Darryl Johnson to receive an official complaint. Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai said: "It has been like this for at least three times during my time [as foreign minister]. We feel that it is something that is not healthy for close allies like the US and Thailand." In what appeared to be an attempt by the ministry to maximize media coverage of the summoning of Johnson, photographers were asked to position themselves in what is usually an off-limits area. The ministry issued a statement on Thursday expressing its "deep disappointment" over the report, saying it contained "serious inaccuracies"—particularly on the government's anti-drugs campaign—and overstated the toll from summary killings.

"The report does not provide a balanced account of the facts, even though the Thai government has gone to great lengths to provide all the information to the US side," the statement read. This was also the case for the reports in 2002 and 2001, when Thailand had to pinpoint various factual errors and the US apologized and admitted that the reports were done in haste. Surakiart claimed. Such a report is "useless" for the governments as well as the public and it needs to be corrected, he added. Johnson, who met with Deputy Foreign Permanent Secretary Veerasak Futrakul, declined to make any statement.

Ministry spokesman Sihesak Phuanketkeow, however, quoted Johnson as saying: "The US generally views Thailand's human rights record in a positive light, whether it is about economic or political freedom." Sihesak submitted a memo to Johnson claiming that only 46 cases of extra-judicial killings were recorded and the 1,386 drug-related deaths cited in the US report were not extra-judicial executions. He also dismissed the allegation that the government would not allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to make a visit to look into the matter. "A request has never been made," he said. According to National Police figures released in December, only nine cases out of 1,176 drug-related deaths have been prosecuted.

The drug killings sparked an outcry from local and international human rights organizations. Foreign governments and the UN Human Rights Commissioner expressed grave concern about the murders, while His Majesty the King called on the government to give a detailed accounting for all the deaths. The Thai government had "failed to investigate and prosecute vigorously those who committed such abuses, contributing to a climate of impunity," the US report said.

After Thaksin's visit to Washington last June, bilateral relations strengthened as Thailand agreed to dispatch troops to Iraq and offered Americans immunity from the International Criminal Court. Thailand signed the ICC treaty but has not yet ratified it. Last December, US President George W. Bush officially designate Thailand a major non-Nato ally, a move that boosted security cooperation between the two countries.

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK'S 132ND ANNIVERSARY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to note that as of yesterday, the priceless treasure we call Yellowstone National Park has been preserved and protected for 132 years.

Yellowstone was our first national park, and one visit there explains why.

It is home to majestic wildlife including bison, elk, wolves and grizzly bears.

It is the site of most of the world's geysers, including the famous Old Faithful.

And Yellowstone National Park offers breathtaking vistas at every turn, from raging rivers to soaring mountain peaks.

Before Yellowstone became a national park, the story of its discovery was scattered with myths and truths throughout the 19th century.

Explorers and trappers stumbled upon Yellowstone's incredible beauty, and returned home with descriptions that sounded like fiction to the American public.

It took nearly 80 years, and an official expedition sanctioned by the government in 1870, to sort out the myth about Yellowstone from the striking reality.

Shortly thereafter, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the law in 1872 establishing Yellowstone National Park "as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people."

President Theodore Roosevelt, a great protector of the environment and treasures like Yellowstone, visited the park in 1903.

One hundred years ago this spring, he laid the cornerstone for the official gateway to the park. The gateway is still known as the Roosevelt Arch.

The American people's love of Yellowstone helped lead to the establishment of our National Park Service. Today the Park Service protects and preserves 83 million acres of natural treasures across our country.

The Park Service employees at Yellowstone have done a wonderful job of protecting the park's natural beauty, while providing opportunities for people to enjoy it.

For example, all of the large mammal species known to exist in Yellowstone before European Americans arrived have been restored to their natural habitats.

I recently had the good fortune, after many years, to once again visit Yellowstone National Park. I was only able to spend a couple of hours there, but it was a great experience.

I first went there shortly after my wife and I returned from law school in Washington. We traveled from Las Vegas on one of the first vacations we ever took.

I still look back with great awe at Old Faithful and the many other things we were able to see, the buffalos and other animals. So when I returned there, even though it was only for a few hours, the place I wanted to go visit again was Old Faithful.

Old Faithful spewed a few times during the time I was there. We took a walk through Geyser Park. We saw buffalo lying right near the geysers. The reason these great animals come and lie down near these spewing geysers is that, to a great extent, they keep the pests off themselves by doing so.

Even though I was there just a short time, it was wonderful again, after 25 years, to reflect back on my little children when they were tiny going there and visiting that park.

I am sure that millions of Americans also keep a special place in their hearts for Yellowstone and the memories it holds for them.

I hope our grandchildren's grandchildren will be able to enjoy the wonders of Yellowstone National Park, the way we do today.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SGT CORY R. MRACEK

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, SGT Cory R. Mracek was a dedi-

cated and distinguished soldier who loved the military and was excited to go to Iraq. He attended Chadron State College for one semester before joining the National Guard and then later, the U.S. Army.

He spent his first year in Korea, where he was awarded several medals. He was chosen to be a United Nations Command Honor Guard for 6 weeks, an honor for which only the best soldiers were chosen. He came home 4 years later and worked as a night stocker at Wal-Mart. However, army life was calling him and he missed it more than he thought. He re-enlisted and was again stationed in Korea for 12 months. Because of the war in Iraq, his tour was extended to 15 months. He returned to the States in October 2003 and proceeded to Ft. Benning, GA, where he trained to be a paratrooper. He loved the thrill the first time he jumped from the plane and it had been his dream to be a part of the 82nd Airborne Unit in Fort Bragg, NC. He had been in Iraq just 8 days when a roadside bomb exploded west of Baghdad and killed him and two other soldiers.

SGT Cory Mracek's sacrifice will forever remind this Nation of the danger that comes with the duty to protect our Nation's interests and the freedoms of other grounds the world. As a nation we are grateful to soldiers like Cory Mracek who make the ultimate sacrifice so that all Americans can live in freedom.

SGT DENNIS A. CORRAL

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, SGT Dennis Corral served our Nation bravely and honorably. He entered the Army in 1989 and later left the service to pursue other interests. In 1997 he re-entered the Army and was sent to Iraq in December of 2003. Corral was not scheduled for deployment to Iraq until January 2004, but he volunteered to go earlier in place of another soldier who was married and had children. Sergeant Corral was not one to complain, and readily accepted every task that was asked of him. His arrival was greatly anticipated by his company, as they had been without a supply sergeant, and were greatly in need of his skills. Immediately upon his arrival, he set to work improving the company supply system—organizing, filing, and issuing out equipment. In all that he did he showed his dedication and his love for serving his country. Sergeant Corral was the first American soldier to die in Iraq in 2004. SGT Dennis A. Corral will always be remembered as a soldier who fought for freedom and made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of his country.

THE SUPREME COURT'S REVIEW OF THE EXECUTION OF CHILD OFFENDERS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President I want to speak today on the Supreme Court's recent decision to review whether the execution of child offenders—those under 18 at the time the crime was

committed—is constitutional. The Court will soon hear the case of Christopher Simmons, a Missouri man who was sentenced to die for a crime he committed at the age of 17. The case is called *Roper v. Simmons*.

In the past few years, our Nation has taken important strides toward fairness and justice in the administration of the death penalty. In 2000, former Illinois Gov. George Ryan took the courageous step of halting executions in his State pending a top-to-bottom study of the use of capital punishment in Illinois. Following an exhaustive review of his State's system, Gov. Ryan commuted the death sentences of all death row inmates in Illinois in December 2002. Former Maryland Gov. Parris Glendening suspended executions in his State in the face of glaring racial and geographic disparities in the Maryland death penalty system. Current Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich has since lifted the State's moratorium, but an execution has not taken place in Maryland since 1998.

A number of State legislatures have inched closer and closer to abolishing the death penalty or instituting moratoria in their jurisdictions. And in 2002, in a significant turning point for our Nation, the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the execution of the mentally retarded. That decision, in the case of *Atkins v. Virginia*, confirmed that our Nation's standards of decency concerning the ultimate punishment are indeed evolving and maturing.

While these events are steps toward fairness and indications of progress, they also serve as reminders that our system is seriously flawed. The statistics and stories of innocent people wrongly convicted are shocking. In the modern death penalty era, 113 individuals in 25 different States have been exonerated after being convicted and put on death row. The most recent exoneration occurred just last week in a case from North Carolina. This should be disturbing to all Americans who believe in the founding principles of our Nation, liberty and justice for all.

As Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens wrote in a 2002 dissent, after the Court refused to consider another case involving child offenders, the practice of executing child offenders is "inconsistent with evolving standards of decency in a civilized society." In my view, Justice Stevens is right. Executions of child offenders have occurred in only eight countries since 1990: China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudia Arabia, Yemen, and the United States of America. Most of these countries, however, have since banned executions of child offenders, leaving the United States as the only country that acknowledges its use of capital punishment for child offenders.

According to Amnesty International, there have been 34 executions of child offenders since 1990—19 of them in the United States. And there are currently