

killed in Taji, Iraq—far away from friends, family, and the Willamette Valley that he loved so much.

Ken was the last of the Leisten men—the pride and joy of his grandma and a large extended family that lives from California to the Midwest. Private Leisten made his community stronger because of the choices he made, the way he lived his life.

Unlike many of his comrades, Private Leisten was a full-time guardsman. He was permanently assigned to the 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry HQ, but he volunteered to serve in Iraq with the 2nd Battalion—so someone else wouldn't have to. Typical. This decision was the rule instead of the exception for this exceptional young man.

The lasting tragedy of his noble sacrifice is that Private Leisten was exactly the kind of American that we need more of, the type of soldier—the kind of citizen—that makes us all better people.

Sacrifice—the willful regard for others at his own expense—was Ken Leisten's life philosophy; it is his legacy. In actions large and small, Private Leisten took the time to care.

A soldier in a hostile land, Ken Leisten set about making a difference by reaching out. He shared his limited water with Iraqi children in the village where he served to establish and then keep peace.

Think about it; safe drinking water in a hot, unforgiving desert. Not many people would share their canteen, but Ken did. He consciously made the effort to share what little he had with those around him—because he knew their need was greater.

Part teacher, mentor, cheerleader, and coach—Ken spent his brief life assisting his fellow soldiers learn the art of war while helping them maintain balance: responsibilities as soldiers with their needs as parents, spouses, and workers.

One thousand Americans have perished since this administration committed our time, talent, and treasure to the liberation and reconstruction of Iraq. And unfortunately it is all too easy for the incredible life and terrible death of one citizen-soldier to get lost in the numbers.

I say this because despite the noise surrounding the war, a silent truth endures: there is no more sacred or loving gift than laying down your life for the protection of another. Private Ken Leisten gave us this gift.

Let us commit ourselves to ensuring Ken Leisten's example is our example; that his sacrifice—celebrated, applied—and never, ever forgotten.

Private Ken Leisten made a difference in the lives of Iraqi children he knew he would never see again—he laid down his life so that the People of Iraq might have a chance at self governance and peace.

We, in this Chamber and beyond these marble walls, are all accountable to the spirit of Ken Leisten. We must redouble our efforts, rekindle the flame of liberty, and renew our America to earn the freedom that Private Leisten gave his life for.

INDIA SHOULD OPEN BORDER AT WAGAH FOR TRADE, TRAVEL

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, the Chief Minister of Punjab, Captain Amarinder Singh has called for an opening of the border between India and Pakistan at Wagah, about halfway between Amritsar, Punjab, and Lahore, Pakistan. Such an opening would help the farmers of Punjab to get higher prices for their produce than the less-than-subsistence prices the Indian government pays them. It would also make it much easier for Sikhs to make religious pilgrimages to the birthplace of the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak, in Nankana Sahib, which is also in Pakistan.

Chief Minister Singh is right. The border should be opened. This would be a significant step towards peace in the region. It would greatly reduce the need for India and Pakistan to expend exorbitant resources on their military rivalry. Instead, the cross-border contacts would strengthen the emerging relationship between the two countries.

Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to call on both the governments of India and Pakistan to open this border. Let the people, money, and ideas flow freely.

By opening the border at Wagah, India would be able to begin to end its repression that has claimed the lives of over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, over 300,000 Christians since 1976, over 89,000 Kashmiri Muslims since 1988, and tens of thousands of other minority people.

This repression must end if India is to be taken seriously as a member of the international community. We should cut off India's aid and trade until such time as it respects human rights. Opening the border at Wagah would be a first step. We should also go on record in support of all people in South Asia enjoying the basic democratic right to self determination.

Mr. Speaker, I am inserting the press release from the Council of Khalistan into the RECORD at this time.

[From the Council of Khalistan]

OPEN WAGAH BORDER FOR TRADE

WASHINGTON, DC, September 10, 2004.—Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, today endorsed the demand of Captain Amarinder Singh, Chief Minister of Punjab, to open the border at Wagah, about halfway between Amritsar and Lahore. This would allow direct trade between Punjab and Pakistan.

“The distance between Amritsar and Lahore is only about 35 miles, less than the distance between Washington and Baltimore in the United States,” Dr. Aulakh said. “Why not allow trade between these neighbors?,” he asked. “Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is to be praised for asking to open this border,” said Dr. Aulakh. “His stand will help keep the fires of freedom lit in the Sikh Nation,” he added. “This is more than all his Akali and Congress predecessors have done for the people of Punjab,” Dr. Aulakh noted.

“We fully support opening this border,” he said. “This is the wise thing for Punjab and the Sikh Nation,” he added. “It is another step forward for the freedom and self-determination of the Sikh Nation. It will help secure the prosperity of the Sikhs in Punjab, Khalistan.”

“Opening trade through the border at Wagah will bring peace in the subcontinent,” said Dr. Aulakh. “This will enable the farmers of Punjab to get higher prices for their products and help Pakistan to overcome its shortages,” he said. “If India truly cares about the well-being of the people, it must open the border at Wagah immediately.” Dr. Aulakh also called for bus service across the border so that visitors can more easily visit the birthplace of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, at Nankana Sahib. “We are the same people. The same language is spoken on both sides of the border. Opening this border benefits everybody and it is much better to open the border than to spend all this time and money constantly preparing for war,” he said.

Khalistan is the independent Sikh homeland declared on October 7, 1987. It has been under Indian occupation since then. When India became independent, Sikhs were equal partners in the transfer of power and were to receive their own state, but the weak and ignorant Sikh leaders of the time were tricked into staying with India on the promise that they would have “the glow of freedom” and no law affecting the Sikhs would pass without their consent. Sikhs ruled an independent and sovereign Punjab from 1710 to 1716 and again from 1765 to 1849 and were recognized by most of the countries of the world at that time. No Sikh representative has ever signed the Indian constitution. The Council of Khalistan is the government pro tempore of Khalistan, the Sikh homeland.

“If India will not open this border, it is clear that there is no place for Sikhs in India,” said Dr. Aulakh. “Sardar Atinder Pal Singh's question of 14 years ago is still the question facing the Sikh Nation: Why don't we liberate Khalistan? As Professor Darshan Singh, a former Jathedar, said, ‘If a Sikh is not for Khalistan, he is not a Sikh.’” Dr. Aulakh noted.

The Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, more than 300,000 Christians since 1948, over 89,000 Muslims in Kashmir since 1988, and tens of thousands of Tamils, Assamese, Manipuris, Dalits (the aboriginal people of the subcontinent), and others. The Indian Supreme Court called the Indian government's murders of Sikhs “worse than a genocide.” According to a report by the Movement Against State Repression (MASR), 52,268 Sikhs are being held as political prisoners in India without charge or trial. Some have been in illegal custody since 1984!

“We must move forward with the cause of Sikh freedom,” Dr. Aulakh said. “Only in a free Khalistan will the Sikh Nation prosper and get justice,” said Dr. Aulakh. “India should act like a democracy and allow a plebiscite on independence for Khalistan and all the nations of South Asia,” Dr. Aulakh said. “We must free Khalistan now.”

ASSAULT WEAPON BAN REAUTHORIZATION

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House for five minutes.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a crisis situation in America—and here in Congress. On Monday the assault weapon ban bill expired at midnight and to date there has been no indication from this Republican controlled Congress that this important legislation will be reauthorized, let alone addressed, during this session.