

Many came here by surviving incredible hardships. They risked their lives on rickety boats facing pirates, starvation, and the perils of being at sea on open boats for weeks and months on end. Others escaped through dangerous mountainous and jungle terrain and those who were not so lucky were forced into so called "Re-education Camps" which were nothing more than concentration camps designed to torture and kill people who opposed the community regime. Soldiers, writers, journalists, members of the clergy and other religious leaders all suffered the same fate in these camps: humiliation, torture, and often, death.

We owe all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam War, both American and Vietnamese, a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. While we pay homage to these fallen heroes with resolutions and commemorations, the most fitting tribute is the enduring memory of their lives.

Madam Speaker, in 1994 the United States ended its trade embargo with Vietnam and normalized relations with Hanoi. While the U.S. continues to open diplomatic relations with Vietnam, we must remember that many issues remain unresolved, including human rights violations, lack of religious freedom, and government corruption.

I have traveled to Vietnam many times to learn about these issues first-hand, as well as to raise these concerns with high-level officials. In addition, the large Vietnamese-American community in my congressional district continues to keep me apprised of the situation. As a member of the Vietnam Caucus, I am dedicated to promoting awareness and policy debates among the U.S. Congress, the American public, and the international community about the greater need for fundamental human rights in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Madam Speaker, I urge every citizen of the United States to share in remembering this dark chapter in history. We must strive to have a greater understanding of the role these events had in hollowing the Vietnamese people of their liberty to provide the necessary leadership so that one day the Vietnamese people may enjoy freedom, democracy, and equality.

I am hopeful H. Res. 228 will serve as a sensible voice of reason and help move the Vietnamese people one step closer toward ultimate liberation and freedom. At the least, however, I believe it will help shed much needed light on the atrocities committed by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam everyday on its own citizens. I would like to thank the other co-chairs of the Vietnam Caucus, LORETTA SANCHEZ, CHRIS SMITH, and ZOE LOFGREN, for their support and urge my colleagues to join me in the passage of this resolution.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Madam Speaker, I rise as a coauthor in strong support of H. Res. 228, a resolution that marks the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Republic of Vietnam and that honors the contributions of Vietnamese-Americans to American society over the past three decades.

April 30, 1975 marked a very somber day for millions of people when the Republic of Vietnam fell to Communist forces from North Vietnam. Instantly, the world was faced with millions of refugees, many who resettled in the United States, but also hundreds of thousands who perished at sea in their attempt to escape

Communist forces. Those who remained in Vietnam were forced to re-education camps and detention as their punishment.

Unfortunately, to this day, the Vietnamese Communist government continues to violate basic human rights of its own citizens. As it has been documented by various States Department reports, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Amnesty International and various Vietnamese-American groups, the Vietnamese government has been an egregious violator of religious freedom, human rights, and free speech. The government in Vietnam has continuously imprisoned religious figures who simply want to practice their faith, journalists attempting to print basic information about the actions of their government, and democratic activists in Vietnam. Vietnamese-Americans are playing a vital role to ensure that the Vietnamese government improves its human rights record, but much work remains to be done.

Even though April 30th, 2005 marks the 30th anniversary of a very sad day for millions of Vietnamese and American families whose sons and daughters gave the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam War, it is also a day to enthusiastically commend countless contributions that millions of Vietnamese-Americans have made in the United States. In just 30 years, 1.5 million Vietnamese refugees rebuilt their lives to become leaders in education, business, and government in the United States and have greatly enriched the cultural diversity of our country.

So today I rise to remember the sacrifice of American and Vietnamese soldiers who fought for democracy in Vietnam and for their families who suffered their loss and injury. But I also rise to commend millions of courageous Vietnamese-Americans who have successfully rebuilt their lives in the United States while fighting to improve the human rights situation for their brothers and sisters left in Vietnam.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 228, as amended. The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

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CALLING ON GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA TO TRANSFER CHARLES GHANKAY TAYLOR TO SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 127) calling on the Government of the Federal Republic of Ni-

geria to transfer Charles Ghankay Taylor, former President of the Republic of Liberia, to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to be tried for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 127

Whereas on January 16, 2002, as requested by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1315 (2000), an agreement was signed by the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the United Nations to establish the Special Court for Sierra Leone;

Whereas the Special Court for Sierra Leone was given the power to prosecute persons who have committed and "bear the greatest responsibility" for war crimes, crimes against humanity, other serious violations of international humanitarian law, and certain crimes under Sierra Leonean law committed within the territory of Sierra Leone during that country's brutal civil war during the period after November 30, 1996;

Whereas on June 4, 2003, the Special Court for Sierra Leone unsealed an indictment issued on March 3, 2003, against Charles Ghankay Taylor, former President of the Republic of Liberia, charging him with seventeen counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other violations of international humanitarian law relating to his role in directly supporting and materially, logistically, and politically abetting the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and its actions, including its notorious, widespread, and systematic attacks upon the civilian population of Sierra Leone;

Whereas the indictment of Charles Taylor includes charges of terrorizing civilians and subjecting civilians to collective punishment, mass murder, sexual slavery and rape, abduction and hostage taking, severe mutilation, including the cutting off of limbs and other physical violence and inhumane acts, enslavement, forced labor, forced military conscription, including forced conscription of children, theft, arson, looting, and pillage, and widespread attacks upon the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and humanitarian workers by the Revolutionary United Front combatants;

Whereas the Revolutionary United Front was notorious for brutally murdering and torturing civilians, including the amputation of limbs with machetes, and by carving "RUF" onto the bodies of thousands of victims, including women and children;

Whereas the Revolutionary United Front made widespread use of abducted children as laborers and soldiers and forced many of the abducted children to perform severe human rights abuses, constituting a serious crime under the jurisdiction of the Special Court for Sierra Leone;

Whereas on August 11, 2003, Charles Taylor departed Liberia for Calabar, Nigeria, where he was granted asylum and, according to press reports, agreed to end his involvement in Liberian politics;

Whereas in September 2003 the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria warned Taylor that it would "not tolerate any breach of this condition and others which forbid him from engaging in active communications with anyone engaged in political, illegal or governmental activities in Liberia";

Whereas the United States, Nigeria, and other concerned nations have contributed extensive political, human, military, financial, and material resources toward the building of peace and stability in Liberia and Sierra Leone;

Whereas the Special Court for Sierra Leone has contributed to developing the rule of law in Sierra Leone and is deserving of support;

Whereas on March 17, 2005, the United Nations Secretary-General reported to the United Nations Security Council that Charles Taylor's "former military commanders and business associates, as well as members of his political party, maintain regular contact with him and are planning to undermine the peace process" in Liberia;

Whereas David Crane, Chief Prosecutor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, stated: "Unless and until Charles Taylor is brought to justice, there will be no peace. Charles Taylor is a big cloud hanging over Liberia. He is still ruling the country from his house arrest in Calabar. His agents remain influential in the country.";

Whereas on March 22, 2005, Jacques Klein, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Liberia, stated: "Charles Taylor is a psychopath and a killer . . . He's still very much involved [in and is . . .] intrusive in Liberian politics.";

Whereas Charles Taylor remains a serious present and continuing threat to Liberian and West African subregional political stability, security, and peace, and to United States interests in the region: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring). That Congress urges the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to expeditiously transfer Charles Ghankay Taylor, former President of the Republic of Liberia, to the jurisdiction of the Special Court for Sierra Leone to undergo a fair and open trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mrs. KELLY).

Mrs. KELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 127, a resolution calling on Nigeria to turn over the former Liberian President Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Special Court has indicted Taylor, who is allegedly responsible for the murder, rape, and mutilation of 1.2 million people during the war in Sierra Leone in the late 1990s.

It has now come to the surface that the al Qaeda operatives both before and after September 11 have viewed West Africa as an effective sanctuary and as a place to launder money. Evidence suggests that Taylor himself was personally involved in serving as a middleman between al Qaeda and West Africa's multimillion dollar diamond trade. The illicit international trade in so-called blood diamonds, an asset that is virtually untraceable and easily convertible into cash, helped fund many of West Africa's wars in the 1990s and clearly is a suspected means of finance for terrorists.

The United States estimates that between \$70 million and \$100 million is still smuggled out of Sierra Leone each

year, despite the coming of peace and the international accords to block illicit trafficking. Taylor was a top conduit for smuggling West Africa diamonds which helped bankroll the insurgency that brought him to power in Liberia. Even though he is under house arrest, Taylor is able to use his financial resources and contacts to ensure that he has the protection of whoever wins the October election. The new government will make sure that Taylor can return home, never to face the court and allow him to continue to pose a great threat to the region.

This is a man who has been indicted on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. We must take action to ensure justice and accountability. We can no longer allow Taylor to evade responsibility for his unconscionable actions. Taylor poses a clear and present danger to West Africa and U.S. interests. With the mandate of the court set to expire at the end of this year, we must act quickly to turn him over to the SCSL.

Removing the potential for his return to power in the region will aid us significantly in learning better the extent of his activities. This information may be of great relevance to our national security.

As a cosponsor of this resolution, I am very hopeful that with its agreement this administration will speak out actively and support Taylor's immediate extradition.

I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) who worked especially hard on this issue; and I certainly do thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the committee.

I encourage support of everyone for this very important measure.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. I first would like to commend the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) for introducing this timely and important resolution, which calls on the Nigerian Government to hand over former Liberian President Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Madam Speaker, the stability of West Africa and many innocent lives may be in jeopardy if Charles Taylor is allowed to avoid justice for the horrendous crimes he committed during the Sierra Leone civil war.

There is no doubt that the Nigerian Government stepped in and helped end that civil war and brought peace to Liberia by offering Taylor exile. The terms of that exile stated, however, that he was not to interfere in the internal affairs of Liberia.

According to the U.N. Secretary General, Charles Taylor is in regular contact with former military commanders,

business associates, and members of his political party. Ominously, his departing statement when forced into exile, that he would return to Liberia, remains his goal.

Madam Speaker, Charles Taylor is an international criminal of the worst order. He was singularly responsible for using conflict diamonds to fund armed terrorist groups to destabilize Sierra Leone. He financed the notorious Revolutionary United Front terrorists, who in turn recruited children and used them to terrorize their own communities. And he is responsible for innocent civilians having their limbs and other body parts chopped off.

I am baffled by the reluctance of the Government of Nigeria to transfer this criminal Charles Taylor to the Special Court where he belongs. Not only is there strong evidence that he was a brutal dictator and a warmonger as president of Liberia; he has violated the very conditions his host government laid down for him to remain in their custody.

I see absolutely no reason, Madam Speaker, why Nigeria should continue to offer Charles Taylor undeserved sanctuary so that he can once again pull together a criminal network to terrorize the people of West Africa.

The relationship between the United States and Nigeria is strong, and Nigeria remains an important ally of ours in Africa. They should not jeopardize this relationship for the likes of Charles Taylor.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 127.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), the distinguished chairman, also the author of this resolution.

Mr. ROYCE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for yielding me this time.

I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 127. This resolution calls on the Government of Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor, the former president of Nigeria, to the Special Court for Sierra Leone so that he can be tried for war crimes. And I would like to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), ranking member, and the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman SMITH) for their support of this resolution and also for their support over the years for the establishment of a Special Court.

Madam Speaker, Charles Taylor has been indicted on 17 counts, 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Special Court for the role that he played during Sierra Leone's brutal war. This hybrid court, which has been supported by this body, has been given jurisdiction over, in the terms of that agreement, "those who bear the greatest responsibility" for

the atrocities and human rights violations in this now-past war. Charles Taylor is at the top of that list.

During the late 1990s, then-President Taylor of Liberia supported the Revolutionary United Front, or RUF as it is commonly known, which was designated by the State Department as a terrorist organization. He supported it in neighboring Sierra Leone in West Africa, and the RUF was notorious for hacking the limbs off their political opponents, even young children. When I chaired the Africa Subcommittee, we hosted some of these victims on Capitol Hill. We held numerous hearings dating back to 1998, examining the chaos in West Africa caused, orchestrated by Charles Taylor.

Employed by the RUF were child soldiers. Investigative reporter Doug Farah described what life was like for child soldiers in his book "Blood from Stones." And in his book he said: "One thing the children do remember vividly is the preparation for what they called 'mayhem days,' sprees of killing and raping that lasted until the participants collapsed from exhaustion. They said they were given colored pills, most likely amphetamines, and razor blade slits near their temples, where cocaine was put directly into their bloodstreams. The ensuing days would be a blur. The children often remembered only the feeling of being invincible before the drugs wore off."

This was Charles Taylor's view of West Africa. Yet today Charles Taylor safely resides in exile in Nigeria.

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In August 2003, some believe that removing Taylor from Liberia and giving him exile would prevent Liberia and West Africa from destabilization. Instead of facing justice at the Special Court in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Taylor was given a seaside villa in Calabar, Nigeria. In exchange, Taylor would refrain from engaging in political activity.

Nearly 2 years after the exile deal, Taylor is still very much involved in Liberian politics as that Nation prepares for elections in the fall. According to the United Nations reports, his "former military commanders and business associates, as well as members of his political party, maintain regular contact with him and are planning to undermine the peace process in Liberia." Now, this peace process, incidentally, has been supported by the United States and Congress with hundreds of millions of dollars.

As the resolution points out, David Crane, Chief Prosecutor at the Court, has stated, "Unless and until Charles Taylor is brought to justice, there will be no peace in Liberia." The U.N. Secretary General's Special Representative to Liberia is Jacques Klein. Jacques Klein has said, "Charles Taylor is a psychopath and a killer. He is still very much involved in and is intrusive in Liberian politics."

Madam Speaker, Charles Taylor remains a serious and continuing threat

to West African peace and security, which is counter to U.S. interests as well.

I am hopeful that Nigerian President Obasanjo does the right thing and hands Taylor over to the Special Court. Among others, the Nigerian Union of Journalists and the Nigerian Bar Association have criticized the exile deal. President Obasanjo is in Washington this week. By passing this resolution, there will be no question where the U.S. House of Representatives stands.

Madam Speaker, I urge the government of Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone so that he can be tried for war crimes and that justice can be served. It is time for Charles Taylor to face up to his crimes. This resolution deserves the strong support of the House.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to thank my good friend and colleague for authoring this resolution, which calls on the government of Nigeria to transfer the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and for bringing it before us today.

In August of 2003, as a vicious war engulfed the Liberian capital of Monrovia, the government of Nigeria made a bold offer. In the interest of peace, they would offer asylum to Liberia's pariah President, Charles Taylor. The decision to host an indicted war criminal that had terrorized his people and fomented conflict throughout West Africa could not have been an easy one. I shudder to think of the countless lives which surely would have been lost had Charles Taylor been allowed to remain in Liberia and continue his reign of terror. Thanks in no small part to Nigeria, the war in Liberia now has ended, a transitional government is preparing for historic elections, and Liberians, at long last, may have the opportunity to live in peace.

But Taylor's asylum deal did not come without conditions. Under the terms of the agreement, Taylor reportedly is prohibited from communicating with anyone engaged in political, illegal, or governmental activities in Liberia. By all accounts, he repeatedly and unabashedly has violated that agreement.

Further, the asylum did not grant Taylor amnesty for his past crimes. This warlord-turned-President-turned-war criminal has worked long and hard to earn the reputation of "the cancer of West Africa." He is alleged to be cooperating with international terrorist organizations. He has engaged in the illicit trade in blood diamonds in violation of U.S. sanctions. He is linked to the proliferation of small arms throughout the region. He has fomented conflict not only in Liberia, but also in neighboring Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire. In sum, Charles Taylor has destabilized the entire sub-region of West Africa, leaving thousands dead and millions displaced in his wake.

But it was Taylor's active support for the Revolutionary United Front, or the RUF, of Sierra Leone, a rebel group notorious, as my colleague pointed out just a moment ago, for hacking off the limbs of innocent civilians, including women and children, which earned him an indictment by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. That indictment, which included 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, reads like a grotesque horror novel.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone, a court which this Congress actively supports, is expected to conclude its work this year. That cannot be done, however, if Taylor is not transferred from Freetown immediately. Furthermore, there can be no peace in Liberia or in West Africa so long as Taylor is allowed to maintain influence and act as a menace to his neighbors. The clock is ticking, Madam Speaker, while the legitimacy of the Special Court and the stability of West Africa hang in the balance. The time to transfer Charles Taylor to the Special Court for prosecution is now.

Charles Taylor, Madam Speaker, has repeatedly violated the terms of his asylum in Nigeria, as the government of Nigeria itself has acknowledged. Consequently, the government of Nigeria would be justified in ending that asylum and turning Taylor over to the Special Court, as we now are urging him to do.

This bipartisan resolution, which has been given due consideration by the Committee on International Relations, deserves every Member's support and, hopefully, we will pass it unanimously on the floor today.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, before yielding back my time, let me just observe that our cooperation across party lines on this issue is emblematic of the many, many problems and areas and countries where the House Committee on International Relations functions in a uniquely bipartisan fashion for the national interest.

Madam Speaker, we have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 127 calling on the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor, former President of the Republic of Liberia, to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to be tried for war crimes,

crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international law. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this important resolution.

We must do everything possible to see that Charles Taylor, a fugitive from justice, is held accountable for his heinous crimes and brought before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. There should be no safe harbor for tyrants like Charles Taylor.

The legacy of Charles Taylor's human rights abuses and corruption in Liberia is deplorable. Charles Taylor sponsored a 10-year civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone and has inflicted suffering on innocent men, women and children in unprecedented acts of cruelty, all done to satisfy the avarice of a cruel despot.

The UN-backed war crimes court unsealed an indictment on Charles Taylor in 2003. He is accused of bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law. It is well known that he provided financial support, military training, personnel, arms and other form of assistance to the Revolutionary United Front to destabilize Sierra Leone and thereby gain access to her diamond wealth.

Charles Taylor organized and ordered armed attacks throughout Sierra Leone to terrorize the civilian population and ultimately punish them for failing to provide sufficient support to the RUF, or for supporting the legitimate government. The attacks routinely included unlawful killings, abductions, forced labor, physical and sexual violence, the use of child soldiers and looting.

I remain concerned that two years have passed and he has not been brought to justice before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The United States must call on the Nigerian government to hand Charles Taylor over to stand trial. Charles Taylor has stated his plans to return to Liberia one day and is accused of meddling in the current affairs of West Africa.

If we fail to bring him to justice he may someday return to power in Liberia. Time is running out for the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Charles Taylor's crimes can not go unpunished. There must be justice for the victims.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Speaker. I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 127.

Charles Ghankay Taylor is a ruthless war criminal who has been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Taylor, the former president of the Republic of Liberia, has supported atrocities including mass murder, rape, torture, mutilation, and the use of children as militants during Sierra Leone's brutal civil war.

Charles Taylor also supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), deemed a terrorist organization by the State Department. He therefore, should be held accountable for the inhumane barbarism the RUF committed within Sierra Leone's borders. Furthermore, this Special Court that indicted Taylor has contributed to the rule of law in Sierra Leone and deserves our support.

In August 2003, Charles Taylor was granted asylum in Nigeria and agreed to end involvement in Liberian politics. The Nigerian government also warned Taylor not to communicate with anyone involved in illegal or political activities in Liberia. However, the UN Secretary General has reported to the Security Council

that Taylor has breached this agreement and maintains contacts in Liberia with those planning to undermine the peace process in Liberia.

Today, Charles Taylor remains in Nigeria. Taylor is a threat to peace and stability in West Africa and should not be granted any freedom in Nigeria. I call on the government of Nigeria to immediately turn over Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Only with the proceedings of a fair and open trial for the crimes against humanity, will justice be served, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 127.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RECOGNIZING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY IN EUROPE (VE) DAY AND THE LIBERATION OF WESTERN BOHEMIA

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 195) recognizing the 60th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day and the Liberation of Western Bohemia.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 195

Whereas the final major offensive in the European theater of operations during World War II, known as the Liberation of Western Bohemia, was fought from April 25, 1945, to May 8, 1945, with Victory in Europe (VE) Day declared on May 8, 1945;

Whereas the Liberation of Western Bohemia was the closing offensive of World War II, which decisively contributed to the ultimate capitulation of the German Third Reich;

Whereas on May 4, 1945, General George S. Patton gave the order for the American Third Army, consisting of 18 divisions and 500,000 men, to resume the Allied offensive into Western Bohemia;

Whereas on May 5, 1945, the Third Army liberated the city of Plzen (Pilsen), the western-most city in then-Czechoslovakia;

Whereas on May 6, 1945, as Americans entered Pilsen, flowers were strewn along the paths and into the vehicles of the troops, while young girls and old men and women ran to kiss the soldiers;

Whereas during the communist era, Czechs celebrated their liberation from Nazi Germany on May 9 of each year in commemoration of the Soviet liberation of Prague; however, after the 1989 "Velvet Revolution", the date of commemoration was moved to May 8 of each year;

Whereas thousands of American veterans of the Liberation of Western Bohemia have traveled to Pilsen in the years since the liberation to honor their fallen comrades;

Whereas the people of the Czech Republic, symbolizing their friendship and gratitude toward the American soldiers who fought to secure their freedom, have graciously hosted countless veterans groups over the years;

Whereas between April 25 and May 9, 2005, some 50 communities across the western part of the Czech Republic will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of their liberation by United States, Czech, and Belgian soldiers under the command of General Patton;

Whereas the citizens of Pilsen will dedicate a statue of General Patton which will be unveiled on the town square on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Pilsen, commemorating the Liberation of Western Bohemia by United States Armed Forces during World War II; and

Whereas the friendship between the United States and the Czech Republic is strong today in part because of the Liberation of Western Bohemia: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the 60th anniversary of the Liberation of Western Bohemia in the European theater of operations during World War II which culminated in an Allied victory that assured the defeat of Nazi Germany and ended the War in Europe two weeks later;

(2) honors those individuals who gave their lives during the Liberation of Western Bohemia;

(3) encourages the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to honor the veterans of the Liberation of Western Bohemia with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities;

(4) reaffirms the bonds of friendship between the United States and the brave citizens of the Czech Republic; and

(5) seeks to continue building a great future between our countries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H. Res. 195 is a resolution introduced by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) which recognizes the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Western Bohemia by American forces.

I strongly support the resolution which recognizes the extraordinary sacrifice by American soldiers to free Western Bohemia from Nazi control. This was the last major offensive undertaken in Europe during World War II. The campaign was led by General George Patton and involved 18 divisions and approximately 500,000 men. It resulted in the liberation of Pilsen, which was then located in what was known as Czechoslovakia on May 5, 1945.

The liberation of Western Bohemia was decisive in leading to the ultimate surrender of Nazi forces and a quick end to World War II in Europe.

The resolution also recognizes the continued friendship between the people of the United States and the people