

the academy." The bill directed the Air Force to develop a plan to ensure that the academy maintains a climate free from coercive religious intimidation and inappropriate proselytizing.

As a Coloradan and a Member of the Armed Services Committee, I have been following this matter closely and have noted that Lt. Gen. John Rosa, the Academy's superintendent, has said that the problem is "something that keeps me awake at night," and estimated it will take 6 years to fix.

The good news is that several reviews of the situation at the Academy are underway, and a task force report is due this week. I am also appreciative that the Academy has already begun taking steps to address the issue by holding classes on religious tolerance. But it is important to remember that an unwillingness to tolerate other cultures and faiths is not only inconsistent with our constitutional principles, but detrimental to the mission of the Air Force and of the military in general. Our men and women in uniform need to work together to be successful, and can only inspire others to serve and serve well if they are able to demonstrate tolerance toward all.

Representative HUNTER's amendment removed the language calling for corrective action. His amendment appeared to downplay the seriousness of a problem that Air Force Academy officials themselves have acknowledged. In response, Representative OBEY offered an amendment that slightly revised the language adopted by the Appropriations Committee but retained its essential elements.

I voted for that Obey amendment, and regret that it was not approved and that the Hunter amendment prevailed. I hope that the Air Force does not make the mistake of concluding that adoption of the Hunter amendment means that they should lessen their efforts to respond to the problem they have identified.

CONGRATULATING MRS. DEBORAH BENJAMIN ON HER 50TH BIRTHDAY

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join the Benjamin family of Glen Head, New York in celebration of the 50th birthday of Mrs. Deborah Benjamin, which will be commemorated this Saturday, June 25th, 2005 at Gotham Hall in Manhattan.

Deborah Ann Coyle Benjamin was born on June 28, 1955, in Peninsula Hospital in Rockaway Beach, New York. Deborah is the eldest of Ken and Gladys Coyle's three children. Her sister, Denise DeVita, and brother, Ken Coyle, Jr., both live on Long Island in New York.

Deborah spent her childhood and early adulthood in Rockville Centre, New York, where she attended Hewitt Grammar School, and graduated from South Side High School. After high school she attended Elizabeth Seton College in Westchester, New York.

In the years after college, Deborah worked for her father's insurance company, the Wheatley Agency, for 20 years and retired in 2000 as Vice President of Group Insurance Sales.

In 2000, Deborah married her long-time best friend, Alvin Benjamin of Glen Head, New York. Alvin is the Owner/President of Benjamin Development in Garden City, New York. They currently reside in Glen Head, Manhattan, and Highland Beach, Florida.

Since her retirement, Mrs. Benjamin has devoted much of her time to charitable organizations dedicated to improving the lives of children. She is most actively involved with the Fanconi Anemia Research Fund, which is dedicated to finding a cure for this rare, but serious blood disease. Additionally, Mrs. Benjamin has lent her support to Palm Beach County-based Kids In New Directions, which assists children in making positive life choices and developing leadership skills. Countless children in New York, Florida, and throughout our nation have benefited from Deborah Benjamin's philanthropy and her generosity of time and spirit.

Al and Deborah Benjamin enjoy spending time with their families, friends, traveling, giving to charities in the New York and Florida area, and remain lovingly devoted to one another after 5 years of marriage.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the entire House of Representatives to join me now in thanking Deborah Benjamin for her selfless contributions to society, in congratulating her on her 50th birthday, and in extending our best wishes for her future success and happiness as she marks this important and joyous milestone.

DEMAND FOR FREEDOM ALIVE IN PUNJAB, KHALISTAN

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take note of the demonstrations in Punjab, Khalistan that surrounded the 21st anniversary of the Indian government's attack on the Golden Temple. Groups such as Dal Khalsa and others marched through the streets of Amritsar, converging at the Golden Temple for a big rally, according to *The Times of India*. They carried posters of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a Sikh freedom leader killed in the Golden Temple attacks, as well as posters of the demolished Golden Temple.

As you know, the Indian government also attacked 125 other Gurdwaras—Sikh places of worship—at the same time. Over 20,000 Sikhs were killed. The Sikh holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, was shot full of bullet holes. Sikh boys between the ages of 8 and 13 were shot on the premises.

Former Member of Parliament Simranjit Singh Mann said that the only way to assuage the wounds of the attack is by freeing Khalistan, the Sikh homeland. Another speaker said that the movement to free Khalistan is by peaceful means. Khalistan declared its independence from India in 1997. That is now eight years ago.

Police and intelligence operatives were surreptitiously watching this peaceful demonstration. Apparently, 21 years after the Golden Temple attack, the Sikhs' demand for freedom still frightens them.

India claims it is democratic, Mr. Speaker, yet it sends police to spy on a peaceful demonstration. In January, 35 Sikhs were arrested

for raising the Sikh flag and making speeches. The Movement Against State Repression reports that over 52,000 Sikhs are political prisoners in "the world's largest democracy." More than a quarter of a million Sikhs have been murdered, according to figures compiled from the Punjab State Magistracy.

Sikhs are only one of India's targets. Other minorities such as Christians, Muslims, and others have also been subjected to tyrannical repression. More than 300,000 Christians have been killed in Nagaland, and thousands elsewhere in the country. Over 900,000 Kashmir Muslims, at least 2,000 to 5,000 Muslims in Gujarat, and thousands of other Muslims, have been victims of India's tyranny. And tens of thousands of people in Assam, Bodoland, Manipur, Tamil Nadu, and around the country, as well as countless Dalit "Untouchables" have been killed as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable. We must take a stand for freedom for all, as the President committed us to doing in January. The time has come to stop all our aid and trade with India, to end our burgeoning military cooperation, and to demand the peaceful resolution of the situation in South Asia through a free and fair plebiscite for all the national groups there.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put the *Times of India* article about the demonstration into the RECORD at this time.

[From the *Times of India*, Jun. 6, 2005]

KHALISTAN DEMAND RAISED ON GENOCIDE DAY

(By Yudhvira Rana)

Amritsar.—The pent up secessionist emotions of Sikh radicals whipped up on the Genocide Day observed as Ardas Divas at Akal Takht on Monday, as a large number of Sikh youth including women brandishing naked swords raised slogans for Sikh's independent state Khalistan while passing pejorative remarks against SAD-Badal president Parkash Singh Badal and SGPC president Bibi Jagir Kaur for not coming up to the aspirations of Sikhs and addressing their problems.

The ferocity of slogans multiplied after Sikh radical leader Simranjit Singh Mann, president of SAD (Amritsar) announced that Sikhs' hurt feelings could only be assuaged when Sikhs independent state Khalistan comes into existence. He suggested that Khalistan could be created on the buffer zone between India and Pakistan.

Baba Harnam Singh, 15th chief of Damdami Taksal joined Simranjit Singh Mann with his arms wielding supporters and announced to observe the martyrdom day of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale at Taksal's headquarters at Gurdwara Gurdarshan Parkash, Chowk Mehta on June 12.

The radical activists including from Dal Khalsa, Dal Khalsa, SAD(A), Damdami Taksal, Sikh Students Federation (Bittu), Akal Federation jointly put up the board of Shaheedee Gallery at the gallery situated outside Akal Takht against the wishes of SGPC. A large number of Sikhs and converged at Akal Takht on the 21st anniversary of Operation Bluestar.

Posters of demolished Akal Takht, Sikh militant leaders and pamphlet on the life of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale were distributed among Sikh sangat.

A large number of policemen in plain clothes and sleuths of various intelligence agencies were hovering around the Akal Takht and its surrounding. A police officer of DSP rank remained present among Sikh sangat sitting in front of Akal Takht during the ceremony.