

that these courageous allies are able to come to America this year, the Lugar-Kennedy bill authorizes 500 visas a year for the current fiscal year 2007 and for the next 2 years so that this critical lifeline will continue to be available. Under the bill's provisions, persons who served as translators or interpreters either for our military or for the Department of State can qualify.

The bill is not intended to address the much broader massive refugee crisis unfolding in Iraq. Already more than 2 million Iraqis have fled the country, and nearly 2 million more have been displaced internally.

Each refugee is a personal story of courage, loyalty, heroism, and tragedy. We have a special duty to protect all of them and their loved ones who are being targeted by insurgents and sectarian death squads either because of their faith or because of their association with the United States. Obviously, we cannot take all of these refugees into America, but we have an obligation to lead an international effort to solve this dangerous crisis as well.

Legislation is essential to address this problem, and I am hopeful we can enact it soon. But it is especially urgent that we act now to protect the lives of the translators who have served us so well in Iraq and Afghanistan.

OUR CHILDREN PAY THE PRICE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the increase in gun violence that affects towns, cities, and rural areas across this Nation takes a particularly heavy toll on our most precious resource, our children and grandchildren. Since 1979, over 101,000 children and teenagers have been killed by firearms. This staggering figure clearly illustrates the inadequacy of Congress's efforts to address the issue of gun violence.

On March 7, 2007, in the small city of Midland, MI, a 17-year-old male shot a 17-year-old female student before turning the gun on himself, committing suicide in the young girl's high school parking lot. Reports indicate the male drove to the school to talk with the female student. After arranging to meet her in the school parking lot, he shot her four times, while her mother watched in horror. He then turned the gun on himself. The very same day, in Greenville, TX, a city of only 26,000 people, a 16-year-old student fatally shot himself inside his high school's hallway.

These are just two examples of the misery gun violence inflicts. According to data collected by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, every day, on average, nearly eight children or teens are killed by gun violence in America. In 2004, 58 preschoolers were killed by firearms. Furthermore, for every child or teen death caused by a gun, there are nearly five nonfatal injuries. According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, the average cost per gunshot

victim, excluding rehabilitation and long-term care, is \$45,000. A single year's worth of gunshot injuries adds up to approximately \$2.3 billion in lifetime medical costs, half of which is paid for by taxpayers.

The Children's Defense Fund, in their 2007 report on gun violence, makes a number of recommendations to protect children from gun violence. Among other things, the CDF recommends parents remove guns from their homes, schools provide nonviolent conflict resolution courses for all students, and communities create positive activities for children and teenagers to reduce the influence of gangs and drugs. Congress must also take an active role. We should pass commonsense gun safety legislation, support law enforcement and community programs, and help focus media and public attention on causes and consequences of gun violence.

I am hopeful the 110th Congress will work to break the cycle of gun violence that plagues so many of our communities and our children and grandchildren.

WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate an event that occurred 25 years ago in New Mexico.

Most of my colleagues know White Sands Missile Range, WSMR, NM, is a premier test, evaluation and research site, but WSMR's role in the 1982 landing of the Space Shuttle Columbia is less well known.

WSMR's gypsum landing strips visible from space and the excellent weather in New Mexico have made WSMR a potential Space Shuttle launch and landing site since the beginning of NASA's Space Shuttle Program. However, WSMR has never been NASA's first choice for a landing site. But in March of 1982, the preferred landing site at Edwards Air Force Base was soaked with heavy rains. Because it was unclear when the runway surface would be dry enough to support Columbia's landing, WSMR was chosen as an alternative landing site.

Commander Jack R. Lousma and pilot C. Gordon Fullerton landed the Space Shuttle Columbia on WSMR's Northrup Strip at 9:05 a.m. on Tuesday, March 30, 1982. About 4,000 individuals witnessed the landing, and another 90,000 had the opportunity to see the Space Shuttle Columbia at WSMR before its return to Kennedy Space Center. I remember this event as a day of pride for me and my fellow New Mexicans, as our home State played such a visible role in the U.S. space mission.

Today I wish to commemorate this important part of White Sands Missile Range's history and honor the men and women who were a part of the Space Shuttle Columbia's landing at WSMR. While the Space Shuttle Columbia has been the only shuttle to land at WSMR, New Mexico stands ready to serve NASA again should the need

arise. In fact, as recently as December 2006 NASA officials considered landing the Space Shuttle Discovery at WSMR because of poor conditions at Kennedy Space Center and Edwards Air Force Base. WSMR prepared for that situation, and I have full confidence that they will continue to work to support NASA and other Federal entities as needed.

CYPRUS ENERGY EXPLORATION

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, the island of Cyprus has a longstanding reputation as a place of natural beauty and rich history. It is now emerging as a potential source of energy as well. Developed responsibly, oil and gas deposits under the island's southern continental shelf could provide an alternative source of hydrocarbons at a time when many European countries are struggling to diversify their energy supplies. If this ambition is realized, Cyprus could play an important role in promoting regional energy security.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus, ROC, is working to establish partnerships with foreign companies and countries in an effort to bring these energy resources online. This process is being needlessly complicated, however, by individuals in Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community who are discouraging foreign partners from working with the ROC. In view of this behavior, I believe it is important to affirm the ROC's right to search for and develop resources located under Cyprus' continental shelf.

Under international law, there is no question about the legality of the Cypriot Government's activities. The legal principles at issue are codified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which Cyprus is a party. The ROC has entered into agreements delineating its Exclusive Economic Zone, EEZ, with Egypt and Lebanon and the areas under consideration for development are well within these boundaries. There is simply no juridical basis to dispute Cyprus' claims or actions.

I hope that both Ankara and leaders of the Turkish Cypriot community will cease their efforts to obstruct the exploration of Cypriot waters. Strong-arm diplomacy aimed at scaring away potential Cypriot business partners will only delay the peaceful reunification of Cyprus—and with it the day when all Cypriots can benefit from the island's energy resources.

I want to reiterate my longstanding call for both Cypriot communities to push forward with the technical talks and negotiations that I believe can reunify the island. However, in doing so, I want to caution that attempts to interfere in Cyprus' legitimate energy exploration activities will only complicate negotiations to end the estrangement of the island's peoples.

The country of Cyprus has long been a key partner for the United States, and our friendship rests on the bedrock