

stone progression, one that the WASPs started. Without them, it would have been a longer, tougher road. They set the stage for the rest of us to be able to continue what they started.”

On behalf of myself, the State of Kansas, and the people of this great country, I wish to express my sincerest thanks to all of the WASPs for their brave and patriotic service in World War II. We are truly a grateful Nation.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Ola Mildred “Millie” Rexroat and the six other women from South Dakota who served honorably during World War II as members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots, WASPs.

More than 1,000 women answered the call and served as pilots during World War II. Because WASPs records were classified and archived for over 30 years, WASPs have been left out of much of the documented history of World War II.

On July 1, 2009, legislation was signed into law that honors the service of these women with the Congressional Gold Medal, which is given in honor of outstanding service to the United States and is one of the nation’s highest civilian awards. This Congressional Gold Medal finally gives these women the honor they deserve.

Between 1942 and 1944, the 1,102 women of WASP were trained in Texas, and then went on to fly noncombat domestic military missions so all their male counterparts could be deployed to combat. WASPs were required to complete the same primary, basic, and advanced training courses as male Army Air Corps pilots, and many went on to specialized flight training. By the conclusion of the war, WASPs logged 60 million miles of flying in every kind of military aircraft.

Following the war, the WASPs were disbanded and the women pilots paid their own way home without pomp or circumstance. Even during the war, the families of the 38 women who died in the line of duty were responsible for the costs to transport their bodies and arrange burials. It was not until 1977 that the WASPs were granted veterans’ status.

Ms. Rexroat is the last surviving member of the WASPs living in South Dakota, and she is believed to be the only female Native American to serve as a member of the WASPs in World War II.

Ms. Rexroat spent part of her childhood living with her grandmother at Vetal, SD. She graduated from St. Mary’s Indian High School for Girls in Springfield, SD. After college, she graduated from WASPs training in the “1944-7” class on September 8, 1944, at Sweetwater, TX. She then spent 4 months towing targets for students behind a T6 plane at Eagle Pass Army Airfield, TX.

Ms. Rexroat is 91 years old and still lives independently in Edgemont, SD. Her vivid memories of her service are inspiring, and I am proud to have co-sponsored the bill to provide these

women the Congressional Gold Medal and recognize their service here on the floor of the Senate today.

While five of the other women are no longer with us, I would like to posthumously recognize the other women who joined from South Dakota: Helen (Anderson) Severson of Summit, SD, who was killed in service during a flight training accident in 1943; Marjorie (Redding) Christiansen of Mystic, SD; Loes (Monk) MacKenzie of Salem, SD; Laurine Nielsen of Deadwood, SD; and Maxine (Nolt) Wright DeHaven of Sioux Falls, SD. I would also like to recognize Violet (Thurn) Cowden formerly of Bowdle, SD.

35TH YEAR OF THE DIVISION AND OCCUPATION OF CYPRUS

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise in commemoration of a deeply tragic anniversary for the Cypriot-American community, their friends and relatives in Cyprus, and for the respect of human rights and international law. Thirty-five years ago this week, the armed forces of Turkey violated the sovereignty and territory of the Republic of Cyprus by illegally invading and occupying the north of the island state.

The international community, speaking through resolution after resolution by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly, has since 1974 called for an end to the division of Cyprus and the return of refugees to their homes. Yet three and a half decades later, the military occupation of one third of our close and consistent ally’s territory by Turkey remains an intolerable reality.

There are more than 43,000 Turkish troops on Cyprus—that is approximately one Turkish soldier for every two Turkish Cypriots. The occupation, expropriation, transfer and destruction of Greek Cypriot-owned property in the north of the island proceeds unabated. Indeed, an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 U.S. citizens of Cypriot descent have claims to such properties. So too continues the wanton desecration of Greek Orthodox churches and religious artifacts that are not only sacred to hundreds of millions of faithful believers, but beautiful and historic sites and objects of inherent cultural value to all of humanity.

Despite a generation of suffering such injustices, the Greek Cypriot community continues to demonstrate remarkable magnanimity in seeking a fair solution to the division of the island. Like many Hellenic-Americans, I applauded Cypriot President Demetris Cristofias’ effort to restart the process of reuniting the island by directly engaging the Turkish Cypriot leadership. Although little progress has been made toward resolving the most significant issues—most notably the disposition of Greek Cypriots’ property and the presence of Turkish troops—after 36 meetings in ten months of direct negotiations, President Cristofias remains committed to continuing his talks with

Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat.

An additional cause for hope came this past April, when the European Court of Justice ruled that a judgment of a court in the Republic of Cyprus must be recognized and enforced by the other EU member states even if it concerns land situated in the Turkish occupied areas of Cyprus. This ruling confirms the international right of Greek Cypriots who were forced from their property by the Turkish occupation to seek relief against those who later made use of the property illegally, providing not only a measure of justice to those able to pursue such a claim, but providing valuable leverage to the Republic’s government in resolving the overall property issue.

These developments should strengthen our commitment in Congress to ensuring that the United States stands by its steadfast ally, the Republic of Cyprus, to achieve a resolution to the tragic division of the island that is fair to Greek Cypriots. As was conclusively demonstrated by the wholly justified rejection of the Annan Plan by Greek Cypriots in 2004, the Cyprus question is one that can only be resolved through mutual agreement on a solution, not the imposition of one. In the context of the current talks, that means the United States must encourage Turkey to give the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community the leeway and authority to negotiate a solution that is truly in the interests of the communities on the island, rather than seeking to continue its military presence.

The vocal support of the United States for a fair, freely negotiated outcome between the communities is as much a moral as it is a geopolitical necessity, given that it is not just the rights of the Greek Cypriot community that are at stake, but our solemn role as a nation that champions human rights and adherence to the rule of law. I therefore urge my colleagues to join me today in bearing witness to the 35 years of injustice wreaked upon the people of the Republic of Cyprus, and in recommitting ourselves to the urgent task of fairly and finally reuniting the island.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

COMMENDING DUDLEY SPOONAMORE

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate and recognize a distinguished Kentuckian, Dudley Spoonamore, a Boyle County High School teacher, who was recently named the 2009 Kentucky Engineering and Technology Education Teacher of the Year.

The Kentucky Engineering and Technology Education Teacher of the Year award, bestowed by the Kentucky Engineering and Technology Education Association Leadership Committee as well as fellow Technology Education