

In light of these realities, I write today to call for the firing of Ambassador Shear.

Sadly, his sidelining of serious human rights issues in Vietnam is symptomatic of this administration's overall approach to human rights and religious freedom. Time and again these issues are put on the backburner—to the detriment of freedom-loving people the world over. In a Constitution Day speech, President Ronald Reagan described the United States Constitution as “a covenant we have made not only with ourselves, but with all of mankind.” We have an obligation to keep that covenant. If you were to take this action, it would send a critical message to U.S. ambassadors globally, and just as importantly, to repressive governments which fear the words of the Constitution and the promise they hold as much as they fear the aspirations of their own people.

I have repeatedly said that it would be fitting for a Vietnamese-American to serve as U.S. ambassador Vietnam—someone who understands the country, the language, and the oppressive nature of the government having experienced it themselves before coming to the U.S. Such an individual would not be tempted to maintain smooth bilateral relations at all costs. Such an individual would embrace the cause of freedom. The Vietnamese people, and frankly millions of Vietnamese-Americans, deserve better than what Ambassador Shear and this administration are giving them.

America must be a voice for the voiceless. The U.S. Embassy in Vietnam must be an island of freedom, headed by a bold American ambassador. Ambassador Shear is not that man.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

Enclosure.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, DC, June 26, 2012.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
House of Representatives.

DEAR MR. WOLF: Thank you for your letter of June 6 following up on your phone conversation last month with Ambassador Shear regarding the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's hearing on Vietnam and the case of Dr. Richard Nguyen.

We continue to urge the Vietnamese government to release Dr. Nguyen. In addition to raising his case with high-level Vietnamese officials, our consular officers will continue to provide all appropriate consular assistance to Dr. Nguyen. Ambassador Shear has personally spoken with Dr. Nguyen's wife, Mai Huang Ngo, and senior officials from our Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City remain in close contact with her.

Ambassador Shear continues to engage with civil society advocates, promoters of rule-of-law, and democracy activists and will welcome them to the Embassy's July 4th celebration. This is one of many ways we promote respect for human rights and rule-of-law in Vietnam.

We will keep you and your staff updated on developments regarding Dr. Richard Nguyen. Please do not hesitate to let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

DAVID S. ADAMS,
Assistant Secretary,
Legislative Affairs.

AMERICAN HEROES

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 9, 2012

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as South Carolinians recognized our free-

doms on the Fourth of July, we also express gratitude for fallen heroes who made our freedoms possible. A moving tribute was published on June 29th as an editorial in The Greenville News.

FALLEN SOLDIERS, FAMILIES ARE HEROES

Three families in South Carolina—and the state as a whole—were given a bitter reminder earlier this month that men and women still put their lives at risk every day to protect American ideals in faraway places. These men and women are heroes, as are the families that wonder, every day, if their son, daughter, spouse or child will return home.

Three from South Carolina won't. The S.C. National Guard troops were among 21 people killed in a suicide bomb attack on June 20. These brave men soon will be laid to rest, but their families will continue to grieve in ways that few of us can even begin to comprehend. It's a heart-wrenching reminder of the cost of war, and particularly of the cost of the current war in Afghanistan and the one in Iraq. These two conflicts have demanded a very heavy commitment from—and thus taken a very heavy toll on—our National Guard and Reserve troops.

The three members of the 133rd Military Police Company who were killed include Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Brad Thomas, of Easley; 1st Lt. Ryan Davis Rawl, of Lexington; and Spc. John David Meador II, of Columbia. Five other members of the company were wounded in the attack. Thomas' funeral is planned for this weekend.

The 133rd, nicknamed the Palmetto Regulators, is based in Timmonsville. It was in Afghanistan to train the Afghan national police force and was scheduled to return home in August. The three deaths bring to 16 the total of South Carolina National Guard troops who have been killed in Afghanistan since 2003.

These two wars have exacted a heavy toll on military families across the country. Many of those deaths have been among Guard and Reserve troops who traditionally have been used in support roles, but have been called upon during these wars to serve more and longer combat tours, a result of leaner operations for a military force that is spread increasingly thin.

Thomas leaves behind a wife, Jana, and a 3-year-old son, Kayden. The family, who grief cannot be assuaged by our expressions of gratitude, nonetheless deserves our sincerest thanks for Thomas' devotion to this country and its ideals. The family members need our thoughts and prayers as they try to wade through a grief that too many military families have experienced in the past decade.

There have been 6,440 military deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan since the wars began. Of those, 1,022, or nearly 16 percent, have been National Guard or Reserve troops, according to The Washington Post.

Few of us reflect daily on the lives at risk every day in Afghanistan. Despite the continuing draw-down of American forces, it still is an exceedingly hostile place. And our nation still is calling on its part-time warriors to complete that mission.

Maj. Gen. Robert E. Livingston Jr., South Carolina's adjutant general, offered a poignant reminder to all of us that these wars still go on and our brave men and women still risk their lives.

“These men died serving their country and I want to express my deepest sympathy and condolences to their families, who are the unsung heroes of our war effort,” Livingston said, according to a recent report in The State.

“These deaths are grim reminders that our military, to include the South Carolina National Guard, is still active in combat defense of our country. We are privileged to have such heroes in our midst.

Privileged, indeed.

As the nation pauses in coming week to celebrate its founding and the establishment of liberties and ideals that are desired by people around the globe; it would be worth taking more than a moment to remember the heroes—both the fallen and those whom they've left behind. These spouses and children, and the service men and women they love, are above the political rhetoric of which wars should be fought and how.

They simply serve. Their burdens are tangible reminders that the struggle for freedom continues and that it has a tremendous and painful cost. This is a cost these soldiers knew they might have to pay when they stepped forward to serve in an all-volunteer military during a time of war, but one their families are left trying to comprehend.

These men are mourned. They are praised. And they and their families should be remembered by a state and a nation that needs to be eternally grateful for their service and their immense and incomprehensible sacrifice.

Said Thomas' father, Charles, “They're doing a very important job. A lot of Americans don't understand that. But they're doing a very important job.”

Amen.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate on February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled, and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Tuesday, July 10, 2012 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

JULY 11

9:30 a.m.

Judiciary

To hold an oversight hearing to examine the impact on competition of exclusion orders to enforce standard-essential patents.

SD-226

10 a.m.

Finance

To hold hearings to examine Medicare physician payments, focusing on perspectives from physicians.

SD-215