EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH'S REPORT ON THE MUJAHEDIN E-KHALQ

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to Congress's attention the following letter from COL David Phillips "Griffin-6" of the 89th Military Police Brigade, sent on May 27, 2005, to Mr. Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, regarding Human Rights Watch's recent report on human rights abuses within the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK).

''I am the commander of the 89th Military Police Brigade and in that role was responsible for the safety and security of Camp Ashraf from January-December 2004. Over the year long period I was apprized of numerous reports of torture, concealed weapons and people being held against their will by the leadership of the Mujahedin e-Khalq. I directed my subordinate units to investigate each allegation. In many cases I personally led inspection teams on unannounced visits to the MeK/PMOI facilities where the alleged abuses were reported to occur. At no time over the 12 month period did we ever discover any credible evidence supporting the allegations raised in your recent report. I would not have tolerated the abuses outlined in your report, nor would I have sanctioned any acts on the part of the MeK/PMOI to hold people against their will. Each report of torture, kidnapping and psychological depravation turned out to be unsubstantiated. The MeK/PMOI in fact notified us on a routine basis of people who desired to leave the organization and then transported them to our gate. At your request, I can explain in detail specific allegations and the subsequent investigation by my units. To my knowledge, as the senior officer responsible for safeguarding and securing Camp Ashraf throughout 2004, there was never a single substantiated incident as outlined in your report.

I am very familiar with the leadership of the MeK/PMOI and personally know many of the 3000+ protected people. I've visited male and female units on a routine basis. Sometimes these visits were announced, but most frequently they were unannounced inspections. My subordinate units would randomly select billets, headquarters, warehouses and bunkers for no-notice inspections. Not one time did they discover any improper conduct on the part of the MeK/PMOI. Also, the MeK/PMOI never denied entry to any of their facilities.

I believe that your recent report was based on unsubstantiated information from individuals without firsthand knowledge or for reasons of person gain. I personally spent a year of my life in Iraq with the responsibility for Camp Ashraf. I have very extensive first hand knowledge of the MeK/PMOI and the operations at Camp Ashraf. My comments are based on a full year of on location experience. I look back with satisfaction knowing that my unit did an exemplary job and maintained the safety and security of not only the coalition forces at Ashraf, but also the 3000+ protected people.

I have spoken to large groups of MeK/PMOI members and have also had one on one private conversations with individual members. At no time did any member, ranging from young male and females to the very senior leadership, ever report any of the type conduct outlined in your recent report.

Iraq was very dangerous throughout 2004. In my opinion, Camp Ashraf was the safest place within my area of responsibility. There was not one incident or combat injury to my forces at Camp Ashraf. I personally felt safe even when surrounded in a room by hundreds of Mujahedin. We always had open dialog and debated difficult subjects. I was exceptionally impressed with the dedication of the female units. These units were professional and displayed strong support for freedom, democracy and equality for women. The dedication of these female members was inspirational. In the entire year only four female members asked to depart the MeK/PMOI. In one case a young woman requested to leave the MeK/PMOI, but first wanted to complete her responsibility as a singer in one of the holiday festivities. One of my subordinate commanders encouraged her to depart immediately as opposed to returning to her unit. She emphasized that she wanted to participate as a singer in the festival and would then depart from the organization in order to return home to her mother. Several days after the festival we were notified by the MeK/PMOI that the young woman was ready to leave and we picked her up at a hotel type facility. The other three females also voluntarily departed the MeK/PMOI. I never discovered a single incident where a female or male was held in the organization against their will. I observed a total freedom of choice on the part of the members to either remain or depart from the MeK/PMOI.

As I previously mentioned, I was very impressed specifically by the all female units. I would like my own daughters to someday visit these units for the cultural exchange. Were it not for the ongoing insurgency throughout Iraq, I would sanction my daughter to travel to Camp Ashraf and meet these very dedicated and professional female members of the Mujahedin e-Khalq.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments as your report was a direct affront to the professionalism of my units. We maintained the safety and security of Camp Ashraf and can look back in years to come knowing that we made a difference.

Respectfully,

COL. DAVID PHILLIPS,

''Griffin-6'', 89th Military Police Brigade.''

CONGRESSIONAL TRIBUTE: RETIREMENT OF PAUL BLEWETT

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Paul Blewett, a public school teacher who has served the young people of the Bark River Harris School District in Michigan's Upper Peninsula for the past 42½ years and has made a significant contribution to his professional organization.

Paul Blewett was born in Ishpeming, Michigan on January 21, 1940 to the late Fred and Evelyn Blewett. He graduated from Ishpeming High School in 1958 and received his BA and Masters Degree from Northern Michigan University in Marquette, Michigan. After being awarded his Professional Teaching Certificate in 1963, he entered the challenging and rewarding field of teaching in the Bark River Harris Public School System in Bark River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Mr. Blewett's first position at Bark River Harris Schools began a very long and successful career and a true commitment to his community. Mr. Blewett taught Algebra I and II, General Math, Geometry, and Advance Mathematics for over 42 years to students in the Bark River Harris High School along with being the driver education instructor for 40 of those years. Paul made a commitment to his students in the classroom and to their activities outside of the regular classroom. They respected him as a teacher and appreciated the guidance and counseling that he provided.

Aside from his full time teaching responsibilities, Mr. Blewett also made a major commitment to his professional organization and contributed to the development and the building of the Michigan Education Association as one of the leading professional education organizations in the nation. Mr. Blewett was recognized by his colleagues for his talent, hard work and willingness to participate because they elected him to serve as the local Education Association President, Negotiator, Regional Council President, President and Treasurer of the Upper Peninsula Education Association, a member of the Board of Directors for the Michigan Education Association for thirteen years, a delegate to National Education Association Representative Assembly and a delegate to the State Representative Assembly for 30 years. He was also involved in the Political Action Committee of the Michigan Education Association. While doing all of this, Mr. Blewett held many other roles within his professional educational organization.

With so much time contributed to his teaching, community and professional development, Mr. Blewett extended family was his students and colleagues until he met a lovely nurse from Wisconsin. In April of 2003 he married Vera and gained a wonderful stepson, Lyndon. Mr. Blewett made time to pursue his love for photography. As a special project, he made a photographic record of many events in school to capture current student life with the intent of preserving history. In addition to exploring his craft through creative means, his natural talent made him in-demand for weddings and social events.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to say "Thank You" and recognize this teacher for his dedication to his students and his professional involvement with the Michigan Education Association at all levels of responsibilities. Paul's involvement in public education and his professional organization made a difference in the delivery and development of public education for the Upper Peninsula and the State of Michigan. We thank Paul for his commitment, his friendship and we wish him and his wife Vera the best in retirement.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.