

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL XHACOB LATORRE

Mr. DODD. Madam President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to mark the passing and honor the service of Marine CPL Xhacob LaTorre of Waterbury, CT.

Corporal LaTorre died this week of wounds he sustained from a roadside bomb while on patrol in Afghanistan's Helmand province. He would have celebrated his 22nd birthday last Saturday.

Corporal LaTorre graduated from Crosby High School where he was active in the ROTC program. A born leader, he joined the Marine Corps in 2005. He was on his third tour of duty, having served two tours in Iraq and was awarded a good conduct citation and a Purple Heart.

In his too short time, Corporal LaTorre proved himself as a soldier and a patriot. The bravery and dedication he showed as a marine, however, was just one side of his personality. To his friends and family, Xhacob will be remembered as an outgoing and energetic young man with a kind heart, a penchant for mischief, and an infectious sense of humor.

As a young boy, Xhacob earned pocket money by going from table to table at a restaurant, charming patrons and earning a dollar for each joke he told.

That young boy grew into a man of integrity and courage. His service and his sacrifice are a credit to his parents, Daniel and Nicole. I know how proud they are of him, and I hope they know that we grieve alongside them. They, along with Xhacob's wife, Frances, and his young son, Javier, are in our hearts.

It may seem at times a sad irony that our best and brightest young men and women are the ones who go into battle and sometimes do not come home, having given their lives in service to their country. But that is what keeps our Nation strong and free.

All of us in Connecticut and across America mourn the loss of CPL Xhacob LaTorre. And none of us will ever forget the debt of gratitude we owe to him and his family.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the attached articles.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FAMILY AND FRIENDS SAY GOODBYE TO
FALLEN MARINE

(By Amanda Raus and Doug Greene)

Family, friends and fellow Marines went to the Chase Parkway Memorial on Wednesday to pay their respects to Corporal Xhacob LaTorre, a proud Marine dedicated to serving his country who lost his life fighting for it.

On Thursday morning, the Patriot Riders were there, with flags to salute the fallen Marine on a bitterly cold December morning.

"It is a very sad day for us," LaTorre's aunt, Carmen Lasalle, said. "May God help us all overcome such a big loss. We will make sure we all teach little Javy the same values we taught you and from Heaven where you will be resting in peace and looking after your son and wife, I hope to feel your smile."

"It's deeply moving, a debt of honor. We're indebted to him for the service he's provided to our country," said Peter Versekas, a former Naval Reserve man on Wednesday.

LaTorre was in his third tour of duty, stationed in Afghanistan, when he was injured by a terrorist bomb in August. He lost both his legs but never lost his spirit. For four months he fought for his life with his wife, Frances, by his side the whole time.

"I got the call he was going to die at any moment. I went running, and I was there, and as soon as I got there, he died," said Frances LaTorre.

Even at the very end, LaTorre was happy. That's how his family always knew him to be. They say he was a fun-loving person who put others before himself.

"He was wonderful, he was always there for everyone. Every person that he touched was special, special to him," said his aunt, Carmen LaSalle.

The people most special and closest to his heart were his family members, especially his 18-month-old son Javier. Frances says he's already a spitting image of his father.

"He looks just like him. He does a lot of the same things his father does," she said.

"To me, it's like he never left. Seeing his son, is seeing him grow up all over again," said Xhacob's brother, Danny LaTorre.

And while they watch Javier grow, they'll remember the dedicated husband, brother, nephew, father and Marine LaTorre was.

"Everybody makes great sacrifices. He made his. I'll always honor and treasure that," said Danny LaTorre.

A funeral service was held on Thursday morning at 10:30 a.m. at the Chase Parkway Memorial. Then Corporal LaTorre will be buried with full military honors at the State Veteran's Cemetery in Middletown.

WATERBURY MARINE DIES IN AFGHANISTAN

WATERBURY (WTNH)—A Marine from Waterbury has died from wounds he received in Afghanistan, the Defense Dept said Thursday.

He's identified as Corporal Xhacob LaTorre, and he was 21 years old.

The DoD says Cpl. LaTorre died Dec. 8th "of wounds sustained while supporting combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan."

LaTorre graduated from Crosby High school in 2005. His family still lives in Waterbury.

"I know the city of Waterbury will rally in support of the family and for his dedicated service," said Mayor Michael Jarjura (D-Waterbury).

LaTorre leaves behind a wife and son.

In a statement posted on Facebook, Cpl. LaTorre's sister said "Thank you so much for loving Xhacob and for the time you all shared with him. He was unique and will always be with us."

Cpl. LaTorre was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force out of Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Waterbury lowered the flag over City Hall to half staff in Cpl. LaTorre's honor.

Gov. Jodi Rell ordered all flags in the state to be lowered to half-staff until sundown after LaTorre's funeral.

"On behalf of all Connecticut residents, I extend heartfelt condolences to Corporal LaTorre's family and friends," Governor Rell said. "He made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our country and our way of life, and we will honor his selfless service by lowering our flags. Corporal Latorre is truly a hero."

There was no word on funeral arrangements.

GOVERNOR RELL: FLAGS AT HALF STAFF TO
HONOR FALLEN MARINE

Governor M. Jodi Rell today ordered U.S. and State of Connecticut flags to half staff

to honor a U.S. Marine from Waterbury who was supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Xhacob Latorre, 21, died December 8 of wounds sustained while supporting combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

"On behalf of all Connecticut residents, I extend heartfelt condolences to Corporal Latorre's family and friends," Governor Rell said. "He made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our country and our way of life, and we will honor his selfless service by lowering our flags. Corporal Latorre is truly a hero."

Flags will remain at half staff until sundown on the day of Cpl. Latorre's funeral. Arrangements are to be announced.

For additional background information, please contact the II Marine Expeditionary Force public affairs office at 910-451-7200.

TRIAL OF LIU XIAOBO

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I want to briefly draw your attention to an extraordinary trial that took place in Beijing yesterday morning. Mr. Liu Xiaobo is a 53-year-old writer and social critic and one of China's most prominent advocates of democratic reform. After being detained without charges for over a year, he went on trial yesterday morning in a 3-hour proceeding closed to the public. If convicted, Mr. Liu faces up to 15 years in prison. His verdict is likely to come on Friday, Christmas Day.

What was Mr. Liu's crime?

He was tried on charges officially defined as "incitement to subvert state power." Mr. Liu's calls for open elections and free speech were viewed as a threat to the ruling Communist Party.

What precisely did he do that got him into trouble?

He contributed to "Charter 08," a political manifesto calling for human rights and the rule of law in China. The manifesto was posted on line last December and quickly gained thousands of signatures by Chinese workers, teachers, and retired party members. Its name is a reference to Charter 77, a Soviet-era petition by Czech dissidents like Vaclav Havel.

Mr. Liu's crimes are nonexistent. Yet his fate has been predetermined. In short, his trial is a travesty of justice:

Mr. Liu's 3-hour trial was closed to the public. Even his wife was not allowed to attend. She has been relentlessly harassed and unable to speak to him since March.

Officials warned Mr. Liu's supporters to stay away from the trial and not write about it online. Police detained some people who came to the courthouse to show support.

His verdict will be announced on Christmas Day. This is an obvious calculation so that the verdict's announcement will garner less international attention.

According to his brother, one of the two family members allowed in the courtroom, Mr. Liu told the judge that "if he was sent to jail, it might bring others freedom of speech."