

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT LEX L. LEWIS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor the life and heroic service of SSG Lex L. Lewis. Staff Sergeant Lewis died on July 15, 2011, when his dismounted patrol received small arms fire in Farah Province, Afghanistan. Staff Sergeant Lewis was serving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He was 40 years old.

Staff Sergeant Lewis was assigned to B Troop, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO. Friends and family members remember Staff Sergeant Lewis as a soldier who truly loved the Army. His mother Betty said, "He just liked being a soldier . . . this is what he wanted to do."

After graduating from high school, Staff Sergeant Lewis joined the Navy and was first stationed in Japan. He joined the Army later, in 1999, and bravely served three combat tours—two in Iraq and one in Afghanistan.

Staff Sergeant Lewis's commanders and company-mates alike remember him as a soldier who exemplifies the proudest traditions of the U.S. Army. They often came to him for counsel and advice during difficult times. His decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, two Army Commendation Medals, five Army Achievement Medals, and two Army Good Conduct Medals.

Mark Twain once said, "The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time." Staff Sergeant Lewis's service was in keeping with this sentiment—by selflessly putting country first, he lived life to the fullest. He lived with a sense of the highest honorable purpose.

Mr. President, I stand with Colorado and people nationwide in profound gratitude for Staff Sergeant Lewis's tremendous sacrifice. He served proudly and honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan when his country needed him most. We are humbled by his service and his sacrifice. I ask my colleagues to join me in extending heartfelt sympathy and condolences to Staff Sergeant Lewis's family.

OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to submit for the RECORD a report on the activity of a congressional delegation I led to Belgrade, Serbia, from July 7 to 10, to represent the United States at the 20th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I did so in my capacity as cochairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

I was joined by our colleague from New Hampshire, Senator SHAHEEN, who also traveled to Sarajevo, Bosnia. Senator SHAHEEN is also a member of the Helsinki Commission. Our colleague from Alaska, Senator BEGICH, also participated on the delegation but was in

Dubrovnik, Croatia, as part of the official U.S. Delegation to the 6th annual Croatian Summit of regional political leaders and European officials.

As the report details, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE PA, has been an excellent opportunity for the U.S. Congress to engage our European friends and allies, and to make clear to less friendly countries that our ties to the continent will not be diminished.

U.S. engagement also provides a means for us to advance U.S. interests by encouraging Europe to focus more on policy issues of concern to us, from democratic shortcomings within Europe such as Belarus to the new challenges and opportunities coming from North Africa and the Middle East and other parts of the world.

The revised Senate schedule made us miss the opening days of the Belgrade meeting, but we made up for that with an intensive schedule from Friday to Sunday. All three U.S. resolutions and most of our delegation's amendments to resolutions were adopted, including a resolution I submitted on political transition in the Mediterranean region and amendments welcoming the arrest of at-large war crimes indictee Ratko Mladic and calling for Turkey to allow the Ecumenical Patriarch to open a theological school in Halki.

Senator SHAHEEN and I also used the opportunity of visiting Belgrade to encourage progress in Serbia's democratic transition. We met with President Tadic as well as the Speaker of the Serbian National Assembly, the chief negotiator in the technical talks on Kosovo-related issues, representatives of civil society, and of Serbia's Romani and Jewish communities.

We came away from our visit impressed with the progress Serbia has made thus far. While there are lingering manifestations of the extreme and violent nationalism from the Milosevic era of the 1990s, I believe there is a genuine commitment to overcome them. We should support those in and out of government in Serbia who turn this commitment into action.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Report to which I referred.

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

REPORT OF THE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION (CODEL CARDIN) TO BELGRADE, SERBIA; SARAJEVO, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA; AND DUBROVNIK, CROATIA JULY 7-10, 2011

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Helsinki Commission Co-Chairman, and fellow Senator and Commissioner Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) traveled to the 20th Annual Session of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), held in Belgrade, Serbia, from July 6-10, 2011. The senators were able to do this despite a U.S. congressional schedule that precluded House Members from traveling to the meeting and curtailed Senate attendance to only three of the session's

five days. Three resolutions and more than one dozen amendments to various resolutions initiated by the United States Delegation were nevertheless considered and passed by the Assembly. Senator Shaheen was also able to make a one-day visit to neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina, and both Senators were able to link with their colleague, Senator Mark Begich (D-AK), attending the Croatian Summit of regional political leaders held in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

THE OSCE PA

The Parliamentary Assembly was created within the framework of the OSCE as an independent, consultative body consisting of 320 parliamentarians from the 56 participating States, stretching from Central Asia and Russia across Europe and including the United States and Canada. Annual Sessions are the chief venue for debating international issues and voting on a declaration addressing human rights, democratic development, rule-of-law, economic, environmental and security concerns among the participating States and the international community.

The Parliamentary Assembly adopts its declaration by majority voting for resolutions coming from three committees dealing with political/security, economic/environmental and democracy/human rights issues respectively, in addition to other resolutions introduced by delegations to supplement these texts. Following the amendment of these resolutions also by majority voting, this generally allows for considerable verbiage to be accepted each year but also for franker language addressing controversial or new issues to be included than the OSCE itself can achieve on the basis of consensus among the 56 participating States. The heavy focus of OSCE diplomats on issues like trafficking in persons and combating intolerance in society is rooted in initiatives originally undertaken by the parliamentarians in the Assembly.

Having the largest delegation with 17 members, the United States historically has played a key role in OSCE PA proceedings, and there has been robust congressional participation since the Assembly's inception two decades ago. This engagement is reassuring to friends and allies in Europe while ensuring that issues of interest or concern to U.S. foreign policy are raised and discussed. In addition to representing the United States as delegates, members of the Helsinki Commission have served as OSCE PA special representatives on specific issues of concern, committee officers, vice presidents and the Assembly president.

THE TWENTIETH ANNUAL SESSION

This year's Annual Session was hosted by the National Assembly of Serbia and held in Belgrade's Sava Center, the 1977-78 venue for the first follow-up meeting of the diplomatic process that was initiated by the 1975 signing of the Helsinki Final Act and is the OSCE today. During various interventions at the session, note was made not only of the vast changes in Europe since that time but also in Serbia, which was then a constituent republic of the former Yugoslavia but is today an independent state making progress in democratic development after overcoming more than a decade of authoritarian rule and extreme nationalist sentiment.

A meeting of the Standing Committee—composed of OSCE PA officers plus the heads of all delegations—met prior to the opening of the Annual Session. Chaired by OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou of Greece, the committee heard numerous reports on the activities of the past year, endorsed a budget that has remained frozen for a fourth consecutive fiscal year, and approved for consideration at the Annual Session 25 of the 26