

54th Massachusetts Regiment the Buffalo Soldiers, to the Tuskegee Airmen. Service in the greatest war or World War II was the culmination of much collective sacrifice and many individual acts of patriotism. The decision to issue Executive Order 9981 which integrated the armed forces confirmed that diversity is our strength and not our weakness. Since the signing of Executive Order 9981, I can forthrightly say that our country has been stronger and a better society overall.

President Truman and his advisors recognized that complete racial integration at all ranks is an essential prerequisite to a cohesive and highly effective fighting force. We see success with the challenges of diversity as being critical to national security. One poignant example is the way our armed forces were hampered with racial conflict in the ranks during the Vietnam conflict in the 1960s and 1970s. This serves as an effective lesson on the importance of inclusion and equal opportunity at all levels of leadership.

However, there has been progress, and I believe that the U.S. Military is a pioneer in providing equal opportunity for its uniformed members above and beyond what is usually seen in the civilian workforce. In truth, a senior military boardroom is a much closer semblance of our society than the average corporate boardroom. But, we can and should do better because it is simply the right and necessary thing to do. Senior military leadership diversity is a matter of strategic importance to the future well-being of our fighting forces. I have initiated dialogue with the senior leadership of each service branch to lay this issue on the table for a healthy discussion.

Of particular note and at their request, I have met with the Commandant of the Marine Corps (General Conway), the Chief of Naval Operations (Admiral Roughead) twice, the Secretary of the Army (General Casey) and plan to meet with the new Secretary of the Air Force (nominee General Schwartz) in the very near future. Their willingness to discuss difficult topics and issues is a testament to their dedication to finding a suitable and long-standing resolution to establishing diversity within DoD. We collectively believe that diversity within DoD and more specifically at the most senior or Flag officer level is critical to recruiting and retention as well as the national security of this nation.

Over the past few years there has been some progress in terms of promotion of Flag level officers and assignment to high profile positions critical to national security. Two examples are Lieutenant General Lloyd Austin currently serving as Commander Multi-National Forces (MNF) in Iraq and Major General Walt E. Gaskin who served as the Commander Multi-National Forces (MNF) West in Iraq.

It is prudent that we accept the fact that diversity is a necessary component within the officer corps of the services and more specifically the Flag officer pool. Of greatest importance is the most senior flag level rank, which represents the major decision-making and influential officer level population within the Department of Defense.

Rather than substituting my interpretation of the myriad ideas discussed in my recent meetings, I think it is best to provide a forum for all of the principal stakeholders and subject matter experts to delve deeper into the issue and provide the Committee on Armed Services

with their recommendations. I have respectfully laid before the House Armed Services Committee language creating a Commission on senior military leadership diversity in the House FY09 NDAA.

The Commission will review current policy and programs to provide recommendations to the Pentagon to insure that qualified minority and female officers are given the same career advancement opportunities as their counterparts.

As you know, of the 39 active four-star Generals, there is currently only one minority, General Kip Ward of Africa Command (AFRICOM). Of the 141 three-star level or 0–9 rank Flag level officers, there are only six minority Generals and five female Generals. Minorities of African-, Hispanic-, Asian-, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Native Alaskan decent represent slightly over 19 percent of the over 207,000 officers in the four service branches, but make up over 38 percent of the enlisted ranks.

I believe that just as President Truman had the courage to sign Executive Order 9981 that integrated the armed services in 1948 that it is now time to take a holistic look at the makeup of our officer corps from the most junior to the most senior leadership position to insure that it is diverse and balanced.

We now have the opportunity in our nation's history to begin to put in place a long term solution to the long term challenge of establishing diversity at all levels within our military.

I believe that the onus falls our shoulders to provide a continuation of the courageous initiative that President Truman undertook in order to fully realize integration at all levels within the armed forces and in particular at the senior leadership level.

I respectfully request that the Congress continue to support the establishment of a Commission to discuss diversity in the officer corps and insure equal access to opportunities for the most senior leadership ranks of our Armed Forces.

AVIATION SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. JERRY F. COSTELLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 22, 2008

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, today, we are considering H.R. 6493, the Aviation Safety Enhancement Act of 2008.

This important legislation was introduced in a bipartisan manner and I want to thank Chairman OBERSTAR and Ranking Members MICA and PETRI for working with me on this legislation.

The United States has the safest air transportation system in the world; however, I have said time and again, we must not become complacent about our past success.

The Committee's April 3 hearing on the failure of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to properly oversee air carrier maintenance programs demonstrates the need for this Committee to ensure vigorous oversight by the FAA to maintain the highest level of safety.

Following the April 3 hearing, the Department of Transportation Inspector General

(DOT IG) made several recommendations to the FAA to ensure proper safety oversight. The FAA's reluctance to accept the IG's recommendations, including establishing an independent entity within the FAA to review FAA employee safety concerns and rotating certain safety inspectors to ensure objective safety oversight is unacceptable. That is why I strongly support H.R. 6493, which establishes an independent Aviation Safety Whistleblower Investigation Office within the FAA; rotates principal supervisory inspectors every 5 years; mandates modification to FAA's customer service initiative; and requires monthly reviews of the FAA's Air Transportation Oversight System (ATOS) database. H.R. 6493 is a positive first step to ensure that FAA maintains safety as its highest priority.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee, I have noticed a pattern with the FAA—the FAA is a reactive agency—not a proactive agency. We have seen it in the area of runway safety; improving conditions at our air traffic control facilities; congestion and delays at our airports and in the sky; and now in safety oversight.

It is a continuous pattern—the FAA only acts when pushed into action by the Aviation Subcommittee or the Full Committee. It is my hope that H.R. 6493 spurs the FAA to be proactive instead of reactive and make the necessary changes to ensure effective oversight of our Nation's aviation system. The American traveling public deserves no less.

With that, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6493.

CONDEMNING 1994 ATTACK ON ARGENTINE JEWISH CENTER

SPEECH OF

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution, condemning the attack on the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA), and I would like to thank my friend from Florida, the Ranking Member on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN for sponsoring this meaningful resolution.

Mr. Speaker, on July 18th, 1994, a huge explosion rocked the city of Buenos Aires—marking the second murderous attack against Israeli and Jewish targets in Argentina, which is home to the largest Jewish community in Latin America. The first occurred 2 years prior and was aimed at the Israeli Embassy. The second was the bombing of the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association—where 85 people were murdered and hundreds more wounded.

It has been 14 years since the Jewish Mutual Association was attacked. Yet, the culprits have not been brought to justice. Part of the reason is there is extensive evidence linking the planning of the attacks to the Government of Iran and the execution of that attack to Hezbollah, an umbrella organization of radical Islamic Shiite groups with strong links to Iran and Syria. Iran and Hezbollah have a history of supporting and sponsoring terror, and they have been unwilling to cooperate with investigators.

I have denounced their actions, particularly Iran for being the engine behind these attacks