

the U.S.S. *Eisenhower* after a flight mission over Afghanistan, Lieutenant Zilberman's plane crashed into the North Arabian Sea, approximately 5 miles from the aircraft carrier. One of the plane's dual engines lost oil and eventually failed. When it became clear to Lieutenant Zilberman that there was no way to safely land the plane on the flight deck, he ordered his crew to bail out. Lieutenant Zilberman fought valiantly to keep his plane steady long enough for his crew members to escape. He went down with his plane into the North Arabian Sea. Lieutenant Zilberman's crew members were rescued shortly after the crash, and the search and rescue effort salvaged portions of the aircraft. However, after searching more than 5,300 square miles for Lieutenant Zilberman, the search was called off and he was pronounced dead.

Each day our servicemembers, like Lieutenant Zilberman, sacrifice their lives defending our Nation. Their acts of heroism are derived from a sense of duty, an obligation taken from the belief in the greatness of our Nation. But beyond their courage and bravery, our servicemembers are also husbands and wives, sons and daughters, and friends and neighbors. In addition to being a highly capable and daring pilot, Lieutenant Zilberman was known by his family and friends as someone with an infectious personality, as Commander Mundy has said, someone who could walk into a room and reduce any tension or stress.

While on board the *Ike*, Lieutenant Zilberman stayed in touch with his family via video chat, where he read and danced for his children. Lieutenant Zilberman was a dedicated husband to his wife Karen, who was also his high-school sweetheart. He was a loving father to his son Daniel and daughter Sarah. And he was the loving son—and only child—of devoted parents Anna Sokolov and Boris Zilberman.

Today marks the 1-year anniversary since Lieutenant Miroslav "Steve" Zilberman's life was taken while serving our Nation. On behalf of a grateful State, I thank him for his service—and his family and friends for keeping his memory alive through their thoughts and actions that remind us of his sacrifice.

JUSTICE AND POLICE REFORM IN GUATEMALA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly on a subject that I have discussed before concerning Guatemala's struggling justice system.

In a country facing a growing threat from Mexican drug cartels and other criminal organizations that have infiltrated every facet of society, a police force that is notoriously corrupt and ineffective at investigating crime, a military hierarchy that continues to obstruct justice, and a conviction rate in the courts of 2 percent, the situation could hardly be grimmer.

Violent crime and smuggling have skyrocketed, impunity is the norm, and reports indicate that many people in Guatemala feel less safe today than even during the 30-year internal armed conflict. There are credible reports of police collusion with the drug cartels, and threats and assassinations of indigenous activists who have petitioned for land reform. And a decade and a half after the signing of the Peace Accords, the military hierarchy, current and former, uses threats and intimidation of victims, witnesses, judges and prosecutors to avoid accountability for past crimes against humanity.

I and others were encouraged last year when President Colom appointed respected human rights activist Helen Mack to assess the weaknesses of the police and to recommend reforms. Ms. Mack has widespread credibility and could be relied on to conduct a fair, thorough review.

But any recommendations for reform are only as good as the funding and political will to implement them, which is too often lacking in Guatemala. Presidential elections are scheduled for September. Unless the current government or its successor is prepared to carry the police reform process forward, not only will a critical opportunity have been missed but the security challenges facing Guatemala will worsen further.

Helen Mack accepted her assignment knowing it would be dangerous. Her sister Myrna, an anthropologist who had documented the horrific abuses of Mayan peasants by the Guatemalan army, was assassinated by the army in 1990. Helen also knew that trying to reform the police would ultimately be a wasted exercise if her recommendations end up collecting dust on a shelf. Yet she has persevered, and it is for the good of all Guatemalans.

Other victims of torture, disappearance, and murder during the internal armed conflict are still waiting for justice. When successive governments failed to hold the military accountable, some victims or their families turned to the courts, only to be stymied at every turn. The courts have issued contradictory rulings, reversed themselves and each other, and cases have dragged on for years. It makes a mockery of justice and of officials who are responsible for upholding the rule of law.

No democracy can survive without a functioning justice system, including a professional, trusted, well financed police force. The effectiveness of the police in preventing and controlling crime depends on the relationship between the police and the public. If the police force is to regain the confidence and trust of Guatemalans, particularly Guatemala's indigenous population which has traditionally been the target of discrimination and abuse, a concerted and unwavering effort must be made to ensure the professionalism, transparency and accountability of the police. It should be a priority.

Ms. Mack's courageous efforts, and the efforts of others who have risked

their lives in support of justice and a better life for the millions of Guatemalans living in poverty, deserve the unequivocal support of the Guatemalan Government and the Government of the United States.

TIK ROOT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to say a few words about a situation in Syria that is of particular concern to me and people of my State.

Going on 2 weeks ago, a young Middlebury College student, Pathik "Tik" Root, disappeared in Damascus, Syria, where he was studying Arabic.

As anyone who is following recent events in Syria knows, there have been large public demonstrations, some of which have resulted in arrests and casualties.

Thanks to the efforts of U.S. Embassy Damascus and the Syrian Ambassador to the United States, Imad Moustapha, it was determined that Tik had been arrested and is being held in a Syrian jail.

By all accounts, it appears that Tik was arrested simply because he was taking photographs at one of the demonstrations.

As an avid photographer myself, I would hope that the Syrian Government recognizes the innocent conduct of a young, curious American student who is fascinated, as we all are, by the extraordinary events taking place across North Africa and the Middle East.

I and my staff have had multiple conversations with Tik's father, with Ambassador Moustapha, with U.S. Ambassador Robert Ford, and other State Department officials about Tik's situation.

We are optimistic that he will be released, because he was doing nothing wrong and at most he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

But so far, no one from the American consulate in Damascus has been allowed to see Tik, which is unacceptable. Our representatives in Damascus should be given immediate access to him—today—to ensure that he is in good health and being treated humanely.

I know I speak not only for myself but also for Senator BERNIE SANDERS and Congressman PETER WELCH, in urging the Syrian authorities to release Tik and allow him to return home.

This is not a time to be confusing a young American college student with the popular forces that are calling for political change in Syria.

Tik is an innocent 21-year-old who poses no threat whatsoever to the Syrian Government, but his continued detention will only further complicate our already difficult relations with Syria.

REMEMBERING ELIZABETH TAYLOR

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I would like to recognize and honor the