

## HB 452/PFC Marc Cole Memorial Highway

Chairman Green, Vice-Chair Patton, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation committee: thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 452 today.

Miami County, Ohio resident and 1982 Milton-Union graduate, PFC Marc Cole, was killed October 23, 1983 while serving in the United States Marine Corp while on a peace keeping mission in Beirut, Lebanon.

The 1983 Beirut barracks bombings were attacks that occurred on the morning of October 23, 1983, in Beirut, Lebanon, during the Lebanese Civil War when two truck bombs struck separate buildings housing Multinational Force in Lebanon Peacekeepers. This attack was targeted specifically against United States and French service members, killing 241 U.S. and 58 French peacekeepers and 6 civilians.

Two suicide bombers detonated each of the truck bombs. In the attack on the building serving as a barracks for the 1st Battalion 8th Marines, the death toll was 220 Marines, 18 sailors and 3 soldiers. This incident was the deadliest single-day death toll for the United States Marine Corps since World War II's Battle of Iwo Jima, the deadliest single-day death toll for the United States Armed Forces since the first day of the Vietnam War's Tet Offensive, the deadliest single terrorist attack on American citizens in general prior to the September 11 attacks, and the deadliest single terrorist attack on American citizens overseas. Another 128 Americans were wounded in the blast. The explosives used were later estimated to be equivalent to as much as 21,000 pounds of TNT.

Until October 23, 1983, there were ten guidelines issued for each U.S. Marine member of the Multinational Force Peacekeepers.

The first 3 are as follows:

1. When on post, mobile or foot patrol, keep loaded magazine in weapon, bolt closed, weapon on safe, no round in the chamber.
2. Do not chamber a round unless instructed to do so by a commissioned officer unless you must act in immediate self-defense where deadly force is authorized.
3. Keep ammo for crew-served weapons readily available but not loaded in the weapon. Weapons will be on safe at all times.

The perimeter guards at the U.S. Marine headquarters on the morning of October 23, 1983, were in full compliance with rules 1-3 and therefore, were unable to shoot fast enough to disable or stop the bomber.

Marc L. Cole, of Ludlow Falls, Ohio was a typical young man growing up in the Midwest. He loved his Mom and Dad, his sister and their pets. He enjoyed sports and played football at Milton-Union High School in West Milton. Marc graduated from Milton-Union in 1982. He also had a tremendous patriotic love for his country and wanted to serve in the Armed Forces and, therefore, almost immediately after graduation enlisted with the U.S. Marine Corp.

My friendship with Marc developed when we played football together. There was just something about fighting through the hard summer two-a-day practices that brought young men together and fostered

the teamwork mentality that he carried with him into the Marine Corp. It gave the football players great pride when Marc told us how far ahead of other recruits he was physically because of the tough football practices he had endured. Marc played on two Southwestern Buckeye League championship teams in his three years of varsity football.

Marc was 19 years old when he was killed in Beirut. Like so many who have died in the line of service for our country at an early age, he did not have a chance to leave a legacy like we have the opportunity to do. He didn't have a chance to get married, have children, serve his church and community, mentor others, or coach a little league team. He didn't get a chance to run for public office, become a business owner or plan for retirement. But PFC Marc Cole's legacy is a legacy of service and a legacy of teamwork. It's a legacy of respect from his fellow classmates for his desire to serve his country. How he and others fearlessly went into a hostile, war torn area unarmed, to attempt to restore peace should be recognized.

The announcement of PFC Cole's death was a "Where Were You" moment in our small Miami County community. I was sitting in front of a black and white TV with several friends in Fairborn, Ohio attending Wright State University when I heard CBS news anchor Dan Rather list PFC Marc Cole as one of the first Marines confirmed dead. Others will tell you they were in class at Milton-Union Schools when the principal came on the public address system with the announcement of PFC Cole's death. Some will tell you they were away at college and their parents or siblings called them from home to give them the news of his death. Here we are 35 year later and it is still an emotional topic at our class reunions and high school "get togethers". HB 452/PFC Marc Cole Memorial Highway

It is only fitting that this section of St. Rt. 55 be named after PFC Marc Cole as it contains the home in which he was raised. Naming this road for PFC Cole is not for his classmates nor his family, for we will never forget. As with all memorials, it is for future generations to be reminded of the courage and valor exhibited by nearly 300 hundred servicemen who lost their lives on a peacekeeping mission. It is my hope that junior high and high school students as well as travelers in the West Milton, Ludlow Falls, and Miami County area will notice the sign stating "PFC Marc Cole Memorial Highway" and their interest will be peaked enough to research who he was. I hope the children ask their parents and friends of their parents about him and if they knew him. I hope they all have a story to tell about Marc. And I hope that every person who sees that sign will remember the price that was paid, in a faraway land, by a good, young, local man who wanted to serve his country and who wanted to make a difference.