

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Representative White and distinguished members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee. My name is Gus Vitali and I live in Centerville, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the memorialization of my classmate and fellow Brother in Arms, Sgt Kevin J. Lannon. Since the earliest days of our Republic, citizens from all walks of life have answered the call to duty and be a part of something bigger than themselves and what better day than today, Pearl Harbor Day, to talk about Sgt Kevin J. Lannon. My goal today is to add context to Kevin's service as I believe it is one of many threads embedded in the fabric that is known as the Cold War. Kevin, like myself and others from the Alter High School Class of 1980, served during the Cold War. The most important fact I want to highlight today is the Cold War wasn't cold. It lasted roughly for 45 years, ending in late 1991. An estimated 35 million Americans served during this time and over 400 acknowledged Americans died during those Cold War era military actions between 1945 and 1991 and outside the scope of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Many Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines were lost in or near Western Europe as well as for off places. It has been argued in the Nation's War Colleges that the Korean and Vietnam Wars were extensions of the Cold War, since those nations were aligned under or bought their military equipment from the Soviet Union. I would agree with those arguments and I believe you can add to that list all of the short actions like Panama, Beirut, Libya, and Granada. Operation Urgent Fury was the United States' response to provide stable conditions and a government to Grenada without the interference of Cuba, a Soviet Union satellite. Sgt Kevin J. Lannon stepped up to deploy for Operation Urgent Fury even though he was not on the hook in order to allow others in his unit to stay back and attend to family affairs. He was the consummate Soldier having earned his Ranger Tab and mastering the skills of being an infantryman and medic, the latter of which earned him his nickname, "Doc." Despite our overwhelming military advantage, he was one of our 19 casualties, making the 27th of October a day for many Alter graduates to pause and reflect on our freedoms. Our Nation's network of streets, roads, and highways are dotted with signs memorializing great Americans like Doc that answered the call to serve others. They all gave their last full measure of devotion and are constant reminders to everyone, that freedom isn't free. I can think of no better way to memorialize Doc than to see his name prominently on a sign on Far Hills Avenue (SR 48). Thank you for your time and effort in this matter.

Respectfully,

Maj Gus Vitali, USAF Retired
Alter High School Class of 1980