

## MORNING BUSINESS

### REMEMBERING THE SOLDIERS OF 2ND BATTALION, 131ST FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT

**Mr. CORNYN.** Mr. President, this week, we remember the brave men of Texas who gave so much to preserve freedom in the Pacific and survived the greatest horrors of World War II. Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery Regiment from Camp Bowie, TX, a Texas National Guard unit, were fighting alongside Australian forces on Java, an island in Indonesia, against invading Japanese forces. On March 8, 1942 the Americans and their Australian allies were captured by the Japanese. A report was never filed by the Japanese to identify the captured unit. As a result, the Texas soldiers had disappeared and were dubbed "the Lost Battalion."

They were combined with survivors of the USS Houston, CA-30, which had been sunk in the Battle of Sunda Strait on March 1, 1942, and dispersed to POW labor camps located in Burma, Thailand, and Japan to work as slave laborers. They worked on the Burma-Siam Death Railway, building a railroad through the jungle and into the coal mines, docks, and shipyards in Japan and other Southeast Asian countries. For 42 months, the men of 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery and the USS Houston suffered together through humiliation, degradation, physical and mental torture, starvation, and horrible tropical diseases, with no medication.

Five hundred and thirty-two soldiers of the battalion, along with 371 survivors of the USS Houston were taken prisoner. As many as 163 soldiers died in captivity, and of those, 133 are estimated to have died working on the railroad.

In August of 1945, after 42 months of captivity and forced labor, the survivors of 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery Regiment and the survivors of the USS Houston were returned to the United States. March 8, 2017, marks the 75th year since their capture on the island of Java, and these soldiers deserve to be remembered for their heroic service and sacrifices in the Pacific theater of battle.

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**U.S. Senator John Cornyn (R-TX)**