REMEMBERING THE NATIONAL LEADER ON HIS BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Tajuddin's Manila visit

Near disastrous beginning of a solemn occasion

MD MATIUL ISLAM

TAJUDDIN was preparing to go to Manila to attend the Annual Meeting of Asian Development Bank (ADB) when Bangladesh was inducted as its new member. The Finance Minister would attend the meeting as the first Governor of ADB and it was decided that the Finance Secretary as the Alternate Governor would accompany him.

Visit to Manila via Bangkok connected with Dhaka by Thai Airways with its twice weekly service was not a big deal. But it became a matter of serious concern when a day before our departure it was announced that Thai Airways had cancelled its Delhi-Dhaka-Bangkok flight. Biman had not yet started flying to Bangkok and the only way we could reach Manila in time for the Annual Meeting was to go westward to Delhi first and then take a PANAM flight to Bangkok after a overnight stay in Delhi.

At the Delhi Airport, we were cordially received by Mr. D.P. Dhar, a close associate of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and by our High Commissioner Dr. A.R. Mallick. We were put up in Ashoka Hotel as the guest of the government. Besides Tajuddin and myself, Mr. Abu Syed, PS to FM, was also a member of the delegation. The PANAM flight 002 was scheduled to depart Delhi early morning the next day and we were asked to have a good night's sleep and be prepared to proceed to the Airport at around 5am.

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We had a free evening and Tajuddin, a very reserved personality otherwise, opened up and started reminiscing about the uncertain days of Liberation War when India had not committed herself to help the Mujibnagar Government. Tajuddin flew to Delhi from Calcutta all alone to meet the Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. It was a one to one meeting and Tajuddin had a tough time convincing Mrs. Gandhi that Bangladesh people genuinely wanted separation from West Pakistan and that India should actively help the Mujibnagar Government to fight the Liberation War. At one stage of the meeting, D.P. Dhar and other advisors to Indian Prime Minister joined in and finally Tajuddin won his day. Indian Prime Minister gave her commitment.

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Late at night we were informed by the Indian protocol that the PANAM flight had been delayed. We had breakfast in the hotel and proceeded to the airport where we were taken to the VIP lounge. Our luggage were earlier collected and checked in. In 1973 it was still the old Delhi Airport where there was no separate International Terminal and the VIP Lounge was a small room behind the Airport Building. The protocol in charge was Mr. Sachdeva, a senior Foreign Service officer, who recently retired as the Indian Ambassador to Tokyo. Our High Commissioner Dr. A.R. Mallick was also there to see us off.

Tajuddin was in his best when he spoke in the 6th Annual Meeting of the ADB and some of the things he said were prophetic. On regional co-operation, Tajuddin said, "We believe that co-operation among the countries in the Asian region will contribute towards quickening the pace of economic development in this region. The countries in this region display a great diversity in levels and rate of growth of income, in potential for development as well as in resource endowments. At the same time, they reveal similarities in socio-economic institutions, culture and modes of life. There is a great deal that countries in this region can learn and benefit from each other's experience."

I found that Indian protocol was taking it easy and did not seem to be worried about the flight and every time I made enquiries about the flight I was told to relax. After about an hour or so we were asked to proceed to the tarmac in two grand old Ambassador cars. As we approached the apron, I noticed that all the four engines of PANAM 747 were running and that the gangway was being removed from the aircraft. No sooner I pointed this out to Sachdeva than the PANAM 747 was already on the move. The moment Sachdeva saw PANAM moving away from us, he got panicky, jumped out of the car, ran to the PANAM Duty Officer on the apron and ordered him to stop the plane immediately. The staff on duty coolly replied that the ground staff had several times paged for the three passengers but since they did not appear, the PANAM flight could not be delayed any further.

Tajuddin was impassive when all this drama was going on, but of the three I was the least worried person. First, we were still the guest of the Government of India and it was now their responsibility to take us to Manila in time for the Annual Meeting and secondly, I had taken the simple precaution of carrying a hand bag with necessary extra clothing. But Tajuddin was in his Hawaiian Shirt and had no fall back position.

Sachdeva finally could impress on the PANAM Duty Officer that the plane had to be stopped since a VVIP had been left behind by mistake. The Captain of the plane signaled us through the Control Tower to follow the plane which by that time had gathered speed and was proceeding to the take off point. We huddled ourselves in the two Ambassador cars and were closely following the 747 just like in some Hindi action movie. The plane stopped at the take off point at the tip of the runway and we also reached there to find to our horror that somebody forgot to bring the gangway for us to board the plane. What they brought instead was a forklift used for lifting heavy cargo.

We had no other option but to place ourselves one by one on the forklift and the operator through a manual process gradually started lifting us up toward the first class cabin door of 747 at least 40 feet above the ground. It was a very slow

climb and at about 30 feet we found ourselves right in front of the running Pratt and Whitney gigantic engine of the 747 ready to suck us in. I looked down and could hardly recognise the tiny figures of our High Commissioner and others. As we climbed up to the Cabin door and knocked, the Chief Stewardess, a lady, pushed open the door and almost threw us out of the platform. We signaled below to move the forklift few yards from the plane to allow the door to be fully opened. One by one, we were pulled in -- Tajuddin first, followed by me and the PS -- strictly in order of precedence. Tajuddin was nonchalant, promptly occupied the front seat of the first class cabin and the PANAM 002 took off.

Tajuddin's official programme in Manila included calling on the President Ferdinand E. Marcos, who wished Bangladesh prosperity and progress and the Foreign Minister Romeulo who dwelt at length about the improvement in the law and order situation in Manila after the imposition of Martial Law by President Marcos. Warlords with guns slinging from their shoulders loitering in his office was a common sight prior to Martial Law. In all these visits and during our stay in Manila, Mr. Khurrom Khan Panni, our Ambassador accredited to the Philippines was our constant companion.

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On the development strategy of Bangladesh, Tajuddin said, "The main thirst of our development effort will be directed towards the Agricultural sector with a view not only to attaining self sufficiency in food production but also to widening employment opportunities and expanding export earnings. The main strategy in this field is to rely on extensions of irrigation facilities and to augment the use of fertilizer, pesticides and high yielding seeds considerably, buttressing this by continuous research in the development of new inputs and their productive use. Long standing deficiencies in the supply of power, transport and communications need to be remedied through selective investment, especially in water transport and rural electrification. The development of water resources, including flood control, is a matter of great urgency for us and in this area we are engaged in exploring the possibilities of co-operative ventures with India. With a large and growing labour force, expansion of employment opportunities is a major objective. We attach high priority to harnessing our manpower resources for the implementation of our plan."

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At that point of time we had no representation in the Executive Board of ADB. India by virtue of its shareholding in ADB could nominate both the Executive Director and the Alternate and it was through skilful negotiation by the Ministry of Finance in 1972 that GOB secured GOI's agreement to nominate the Alternate Director in ADB from 1974 and the Alternate in the World Bank from 1972 on a permanent basis. That this arrangement for ADB broke down after more than 30 years is unfortunate. One can only hope that GOB should be able to maintain its right to nominate the Alternate in the World Bank.

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Pakistan was represented in the Annual Meeting by its Secretary, Economic Affairs Division, Mr. S.S. Iqbal Hossain. Who has always been a vocal exponent of legitimate cause of East Pakistan. Mr. Iqbal Hossain was so touched by the amiable disposition and courteous gesture of Tajuddin towards him that he deviated from the prepared text and welcomed Bangladesh as the new member of ADB. Although back home in Pakistan, Bangladesh was still 'East Pakistan under Indian Occupation', Iqbal Hossain accorded de-facto recognition to Bangladesh long before de jure recognition came a year later in 1974.

Md Matiul Islam is a former Finance Secretary.

Srebrenica: Reconstructing the European horror

SAAD S. KHAN

FAMILIES of victims from all over the country converged into Srebrenica last week to commemorate the death of thousands of unarmed Bosnians at the hands of the Serb forces, ten years ago. The atmosphere at this ceremony attended by over 50,000 men and women was sombre, many were seen crying and comforting each other, others could find no shoulder to cry on since all their loved ones were inside the mass graves, that they had come to lit candles on. Many others simply did not want to cry any more and wanted to overcome the past. Still, many burst into tears when the recitation of passages from the Koran began and many more when the choir of girls started singing "Srebrenica inferno." The anniversary was marked by the men marching on the same trek as the 8,000 men and boys had on their march of death. While the women honoured the victims by dotting the graves with red and yellow rose petals.

For the families of victims, the mourning will never end as long as they live, but for us, the rest of the humanity, its time to make some reflections on the events of the fateful 11th of July in the year 1995. This was the first and only massacre of this horrific proportion on European soil since the end of World War II, but its importance lies not alone in the scale of human tragedy but in that of legal and moral catastrophe. The principal casualties were the sanctity of international law, the morality of humankind, and the integrity of the United Nations, all of whom lay dead that day atop the human fatalities.

Although the mind and pen would tremble to reconstruct the gory events, yet to put this piece in proper perspective, the vignette behind the mass graves must be added. During the height of civil war in Bosnia, the theretofore little-known town of Srebrenica was declared one of the six safe havens by the United Nations. The victims of war were assured of the protection of the world community through the UN troops, while fighting raged on all across the length and breadth of Bosnia. The town's Muslim population had swelled to 40,000 as more and more displaced people came to save their lives. The UN troops took away the weapons from the Muslims as a precondition for UN protection. Around 1,500 Serb irregulars had been besieging the town for two years and there had occurred an alarming shortage of food, medicines, and other necessities in the enclave. Not so for the UN troops, who were seen devouring fried chicken sandwiches and listening to pop music day in and day out. And as the acme of shame for the United Nations, some were pocketing profits from selling their excess food to the invading Serbs. The inaction of the UN at the miseries of Srebrenica, although not surprising, was deplorable. Yet nobody in their wildest dreams had feared that the UN would eventually "midwife the death" of people under its protection.

On July 9-10, the Serbs breached the UN sanctuary and when the Muslims asked the Dutch UN peacekeepers to return their light weapons for self-defense, the same was refused. And as if this callousness was not enough, a stage-managed episode of 15 Dutch UN troops being taken hostage by the Serbs, and then released after the former had handed over their own weapons to them, was conducted before the victims were thrown at the mercy of the enemy. The apathy of the UN over genocide would have been reprehensible anyway, but the act of assembling and disarming the civil population under the bait of safe haven, and then exposing them to a duck shoot by rearming the invaders, is something so egregiously grave that there cannot be two opinions that the perpetrators must be brought to justice. Its never too late and it will be never too late, even if the trials may have to be conducted posthumously.

This time the civil society in Serbia is calling for a public apology, of confessing of the sins, and of atoning for them. The Serb people are rethinking history, trying to come to grips with truth and reality, and sifting heroes from criminals. Even today, a significant minority in Serbia proper does not believe that the Srebrenica carnage even occurred, but the proportion of such people is decreasing with each passing day. Hats off for the bold gesture of President Boris Tadic of Serbia, whose presence at the ceremony will have salutary effect even across the borders in Bosnia. The Muslim community worldwide must know that decency and morality are not solely Muslim preserves; all humanity is common legatee of the feelings of compassion and empathy.

It is time to admit that crimes against humanity have been committed in Europe and elsewhere both by Muslims and others, yet the total number of people killed in genocides and ethnic cleansing by the Europeans against its minorities, right from the Spanish Inquisition, through the Jewish holocaust, and up to the Srebrenica bloodbath, far surpass the numbers killed by the acts of terrorism against the West by the "others."

Admittedly, the numbers are hardly important since each human life is precious and must enjoy sanctity. Yet, if Osama bin Laden is taken as a state of mind, rather than a person, then there are Osamas galore in Europe as well. Muslims were involved in acts of terrorism, but theirs were mostly individual acts, not the acts of state. The criminals were hardly ever acclaimed as heroes, as in Serbia, and the Muslim governments were never failing in their resolve to fight the terror side by side with the West. If on the other hand, an impartial exhaustive inquiry is conducted on Srebrenica, as a case in point, it may not be surprising if the existence of a fairly broad-based conscience policy at some levels in the circles of power to exterminate Muslims from Europe, at that time, is traced.

Srebrenica, with its 27,000 pre-war Muslim majority is reduced to a 4,000-strong minority. The green coloured graves of genocide victims in their thousands, with crescent engraved on each, remain as witness to the Muslim presence of six centuries. With the homes of Muslims trashed, their assets trampled, and their mosques torched, the aim of ethnic cleansing appears to have been achieved. But this is not to be. Civility must have the last laugh over barbarity. It cannot be overemphasised, therefore, that the untiring resolve of the most of humanity for a just, better, and secure world should never die. The acts of genocide should be consigned to the dustbin of history and we should be able to look ahead to a peaceful coexistence of the human fraternity.

The civilised world should ensure that, one, the UN declares July 11 as world genocide day. Two, the Serb authorities pay compensation and damages to the families of the manslaughter. And three, criminal cases for war crimes be instituted against the then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali, for his failure to resign, even if he was not directly responsible, and against the 600 Dutch UN peace keepers for cowardice, dereliction of duty, complicity in genocide, and gross contravention of the military code of honour. If they are not guilty, let them prove their innocence in the court of law along with the other suspects at the International Tribunal on former Yugoslavia.

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PHOTO: AFP

An invalid of Bosnia's 1992-95 war passes by a building 16 July 2005 in Srebrenica, a few days after the 10th anniversary of the massacre of some 8,000 Muslim males. The building like almost any other in the eastern Bosnian town still carries wartime scars, making it difficult to believe that firearms went silent almost ten years ago.

A beacon of light on poverty eradication

LUCIANO LAVIZZARI

IN 2000, the Millennium Declaration solidified a historic global commitment to end poverty and hunger. Today, in 2005, we are still very much struggling to fulfil this commitment. But there is room for optimism. Many countries are well on their way towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) they set for themselves to eliminate extreme hunger and poverty. Bangladesh is a case in point.

In line with the MDGs, Bangladesh set itself the target to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half, from 28 per cent to 14 per cent, by 2015. The latest available data, released by the United Nations in February 2005, show that the proportion of people in extreme poverty has been reduced from 28 per cent to 20 per cent -- more than half the target in less than half the timeframe.

A recent Country Programme Evaluation of IFAD's work in Bangladesh found that much of the success of the rural poverty projects it has financed over the past ten years is linked to government macroeconomic policies that have created an environment favouring stability and growth. Other policies have contributed to positive developments in rural areas, where extreme poverty is most prevalent.

For example, abolishing restrictions on the sites of shallow tube wells has made it easier for poor rural people to access water. Reducing tariffs on imported diesel engines and liberalising the retail markets for fertilisers have made it possible for smallholders to purchase these critical inputs. These public-sector policy changes are directly related to private-sector supply of goods and services to the rural areas. As such, they have also helped to increase the returns to the private sector and their investments in rural areas.

What is interesting is that higher returns in agriculture due to increased use of fertiliser, increased availability of water and lower cost fuel are accruing not only to large landowners or agri-business operators, as one might assume. They are also accruing to many poor rural households increasing the returns to their main resource -- household labour, especially where livestock and horticulture activities are concerned.

For example, we can look at the estimated 170,000 landless and small farmers in the districts of Tangail, Gazipur, Narsingdi, and Kishorganj, who are participating in the IFAD-financed Agricultural Diversification and Intensification Project. Some 79 per cent now grow vegetables, whereas only 42 per cent did so previously. Homestead vegetable production has increased by 55 per cent. These increases are linked to market-related changes in the availability of water and fertiliser, as well as the training, technology and microfinance that the project supports.

One thing is certain: a balanced approach is required. Poor people often need help to enter on an equal footing -- and they sometimes need protection.

Results from the IFAD supported projects in Bangladesh that we evaluated showed that rural poor people have not only benefited from good macroeconomic policies and growth of the private sector in rural economies. They themselves are also contributing to such growth.

One example is the farmers and poor households who participated in the Small Scale Water Resources Project (1996-2002) co-financed by IFAD, the Asian Development Bank, and the Netherlands. About 100,000 farmers with small plots and poor households owning small ditches (*doba* or *pagar)* were producing an additional 375,000 metric tons of various crops per year by project closing.

Today there are increasing calls nationally and internationally for greater involvement of the private sector in sustaining the progress of Bangladesh to meet the MDGs. New national strategies like the current work-in-progress referred to as *Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction* put the private sector front and center, while retaining a role for the government as facilitator, especially in infrastructure and capacity building.

Experience from rural poverty reduction projects financed by IFAD over the last ten years confirms the wisdom of this strategic choice. Moreover, there is evidence that larger, more skilled private-sector operators, including seed producers, marketing agents and various service providers, have much to offer that can be shared with poor people through strong partnerships between the public and private sectors. The evaluation of IFAD projects and the situation in rural Bangladesh led us to recommend that such collaboration be pursued. This week, IFAD will be discussing with our partners what some of the best ways to do this might be.

One thing is certain: a balanced approach is required. It would be unwise to fall into the trap of over-simplification or to suggest that the private sector and the market hold all solutions. While poor rural people have proven fully capable of entering the market and succeeding as private-sector operators, this has happened only when certain conditions were fulfilled. We found that poor people often need help to enter on an equal footing -- and they sometimes need protection.

By help, we do not mean, for example, subsidising the cost of livestock vaccines or credit -- a sure way to undermine the development of sustainable private sector supplies of these essentials. We mean, for example, better access to information and technologies that meet their needs and possibilities. By protection, we mean, for example, norms, and standards that help guarantee the safety and quality of their yields and the equipment and material they use. In sum, we need measures that enable the rural poor to claim their rights, expand their influence over public policy and institutions, and enhance their bargaining power in the marketplace.

A shopping bag project: An NGO microcredit programme providing self-employment to the sub-urban poor.

Luciano Lavizzari is Director of the Office of Evaluation for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

A question of journalistic ethics

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

IT is human instinct to know what is happening around as well as in other parts of the world. The news media, both print and electronic, provide the information. A reporter is the eyes and ears of news media. No news media is any better than that of its reporting staff. Photograph of significant event, eye catching heading and good lay out would matter little if reporting on the event is missing. And the job of reporting is risky. Many reporters lost their lives while covering war in battlefields or working in a conflict region. The basic philosophy of news reporting is the presentation of truth, not hiding it.

But what is actually happening in America these days? Are the news media following the ethics of news reporting? To begin with, I would like to recall oft quoted comment of Alexander Hamilton, lawmaker, first Secretary of Treasury in the United States of America (1789-1795), and founder of modern America, who said that "it was the press that the morals of this country have been ruined, and it is by the

press that they shall be restored." Now again the press in America has actually ruined the basic fabrics of society. By and large, it has turned out to be the propaganda machine of the ruling clique. They do not have any independent opinions. In the nineteenth century the news media in America had an image of protecting the interests of Americans, but now-a-days the news media has been toeing the line of government propaganda machine.

Against this gloomy backdrop a reporter of the New York Times, Judith Miller has made a news headline by herself accepting the ruling of a federal judge to go to jail instead of divulging the name of confidential sourceÊregarding CIA operative. The story goes like this that Judith Miller, investigative reporter of the New York Times refused to testify before the grand jury investigating the public disclosure of the identity of a CIA operative, Valerie Plame, wife of Joseph C. Wilson, former Acting Ambassador to Iraq during 1990-1991.

Judith Miller did not report on the matter but she interviewed someone who disclosed the name of Valerie Plame. An article, however, by the syndicated columnist Robert Novak disclosed that Joseph Wilson, a retired career diplomat, was married to an undercover CIA officer. The purpose of such article was to bring disgrace against Joseph Wilson since in his report to CIA Joseph Wilson said Saddam Hussein in Iraq did not buy any uranium from Niger that could be used for making nuclear weapons. Wilson was asked by CIA to investigate the matter while he was serving in the State Department as Director in charge of Africa. Wilson had also made public through his op-ed article in the New York Times that President had misrepresented the facts in his State of the Union address in 2003 wherein he said that Saddam Hussein attempted to import uranium from Niger.ÊThat caused embarrassment to Bush administration. It was not only Ambassador Wilson but also Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency who declared in the Security Council that the document produced by Bush administration in connection with importation of uranium from Niger by Saddam Hussein was false.

The New York Times in its editorial column on July 7 paid tribute to Judith Miller for her courageous decision saying that "by accepting her sentence, Ms Miller bowed to the authority of the court. But she acted in the great tradition of civil disobedience that began with this nation's founding which holds that the common good is best served in some instances by private citizens who are willing to defy a legal, but unjust or unwise order." Concluding it said that "we stand with Ms Miller and thank her for taking on that fight for the rest of us."

Former Ambassador Joseph Wilson in a letter to the New York Times (published on July 7) said that "the sentencing of Judith Miller to jail for refusing to disclose her sources is the direct result of the culture of unaccountability that infects the Bush White House from top to bottom."

However, one group of journalists is of the opinion that she should have divulged the source who disclosed the name of Palme in the interest of the public. Col. Allan, Editor of New York Post, said that "we here at the Post believe that reporters are not above the law." Another special Correspondent of CNN, Frank Sesno said that "this is not a Pentagon papers case. This is not the kind of case that, as a journalist, you'd want to go down for the count on." But the stand taken by Judith Miller is journalistic ethics. It has been the established tradition that reporters should not divulge the source of information under any circumstances.

Meanwhile, another reporter of Time magazine Matthew Copper decided to testify before grand jury because the management of the magazine decided to release documents as demanded by judge that revealed his confidential sources. It implied that authority of Time magazine did not support the stand taken earlier by Matthew Copper. According to different sources, Karl Rove, Deputy Chief at the White House and advisor to President Bush might have disclosed the identity of CIA officer, but his lawyer said that Rove did not name CIA officer. According to AP (Associated Press), as telecast by MSNBC television, the White House denied for better part of two years that Presidential advisor Karl Rove had anything to do with the leak of a female CIA officer's identityÊÊand that whoever did would be fired. But Bush spokesman Scott McClellan on July 12 repeatedly refused those claims in the face of virulent attacks by the journalists at the White House. This was done because Rove's lawyer acknowledged that Presidential advisor spoke to Matthew Cooper of Time magazine, one of the reporters who disclosed Valerie Palme. It was revealed by Matthew Copper before grand jury that not only Karl Rove but also Lewis Scooter Libby, Chief of staff to Vice-President Dick Cheney, were the sources of information about operative CIA officer. Like Rove. Libby never used Valerie Plame's name or indicated that her status was covert, said Copper in his testimony. Section 421 of the Intelligence identities Protection Act of 1982 prohibits discloser of identity. In April, 1999, former US President and past Director of CIA, George H.W. Bush said, "even though I am a tranquil guy now at this stage of my life, I have nothing but contempt and anger for those who betray the trust by exposing the name of our sources. They are, in my view, the most insidious of traitors."

Former Ambassador Joseph Wilson in a letter to the New York Times (published on July 7) said that "the sentencing of Judith Miller to jail for refusing to disclose her sources is the direct result of the culture of unaccountability that infects the Bush White House from top to bottom. President Bush's refusal to enforce his own call for full cooperation with the special counsel has brought us to this point. Clearly, the conspiracy to cover up the web of lies that underpinned the invasion of Iraq is more important to the White House than coming clean on a serious breach of national security."

Ms Miller, who joined The New York Times in 1977Êserved as Chief of Cairo bureau and also served in Paris and became news editor and deputy bureau chief at Washington, DC. Miller won the Pulitzer Prize for reporting on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and Al-qaeda. Unfortunately, no one found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The New York Times had to seek apology to the public on May 25, 2004 for misrepresenting facts in Iraq. Judith Miller herself admitted that her stories were based on the information given to her by Ahmad Chalabi, the exile Iraqi in the United States whose organisation was subsidised by the Department of Defense (Pentagon). Judith Miller is now in Alexandria jail in Virginia for a period of four months. In view of this embarrassing situation in the United States, journalists are demanding a shield to protect their professional ethics.

Mohammad Amjad Hossain, a former diplomat, resides in Virginia.