AMENDMENT TO H.R. 1540, AS REPORTED
OFFERED BY MR. BISHOP OF NEW YORK

Page 531, after line 2, insert the following:

SEC. 1099C. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE RECOVERY OF THE REMAINS OF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES KILLED IN THURSTON ISLAND, ANTARCTICA.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Commencing August 26, 1946, though late February 1947 the United States Navy Antarctic Developments Program Task Force 68, codenamed “Operation Highjump” initiated and undertook the largest ever-to-this-date exploration of the Antarctic continent.

(2) The primary mission of the Task Force 68 organized by Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd Jr. USN, (Ret) and led by Rear Admiral Richard H. Cruzen, USN, was to do the following:

(A) Establish the Antarctic research base Little America IV.

(B) In the defense of the United States of America from possible hostile aggression from abroad - to train personnel test equipment, de-
velop techniques for establishing, maintaining and utilizing air bases on ice, with applicability comparable to interior Greenland, where conditions are similar to those of the Antarctic.

(C) Map and photograph a full two-thirds of the Antarctic Continent during the classified, hazardous duty/volunteer-only operation involving 4700 sailors, 23 aircraft and 13 ships including the first submarine the U.S.S. Sennet, and the aircraft carrier the U.S.S. Philippine Sea, brought to the edge of the ice pack to launch (6) Navy ski-equipped, rocket-assisted R4Ds.

(D) Consolidate and extend United States sovereignty over the largest practicable area of the Antarctic continent.

(E) Determine the feasibility of establishing, maintaining and utilizing bases in the Antarctic and investigating possible base sites.

(3) While on a hazardous duty/all volunteer mission vital to the interests of National Security and while over the eastern Antarctica coastline known as the Phantom Coast, the PBM-5 Martin Mariner “Flying Boat” “George 1” entered a whiteout over Thurston Island. As the pilot at-
tempted to climb, the aircraft grazed the glacier’s ridgeline and exploded within 5 seconds instantly killing Ensign Maxwell Lopez, Navigator and Wendell “Bud” Hendersin, Aviation Machinists Mate 1st Class while Frederick Williams, Aviation Radioman 1st Class died several hours later. Six other crewmen survived including the Captain of the “George 1’s” seaplane tender U.S.S. Pine Island.

(4) The bodies of the dead were protected from the desecration of Antarctic scavenging birds (Skuas) by the surviving crew wrapping the bodies and temporarily burying the men under the starboard wing engine nacelle.

(5) Rescue requirements of the “George-1” survivors forced the abandonment of their crewmates’ bodies.

(6) Conditions prior to the departure of Task Force 68 precluded a return to the area to recover the bodies.

(7) For nearly 60 years Navy promised the families that they would recover the men: “If the safety, logistical, and operational prerequisites allow a mission in the future, every effort will be made to bring our sailors home.”.
(8) The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command twice offered to recover the bodies of this crew for Navy.

(9) A 2004 NASA ground penetrating radar overflight commissioned by Navy relocated the crash site three miles from its crash position.

(10) The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command offered to underwrite the cost of an aerial ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey of the crash site area by NASA.

(11) The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command studied the recovery with the recognized recovery authorities and national scientists and determined that the recovery is only “medium risk”.

(12) National Science Foundation and scientists from the University of Texas, Austin, regularly visit the island.

(13) The crash site is classified as a “perishable site”, meaning a glacier that will calve into the Bellingshausen Sea.

(14) The National Science Foundation maintains a presence in area - of the Pine Island Glacier.

(15) The National Science Foundation Director of Polar Operations will assist and provide assets for the recovery upon the request of Congress.
The United States Coast Guard is presently pursuing the recovery of 3 WWII air crewmen from similar circumstances in Greenland.

On Memorial Day, May 25, 2009, President Barak Obama declared: “. . .the support of our veterans is a sacred trust. . .we need to serve them as they have served us. . .that means bringing home all our POWs and MIAs. . .”.

The policies and laws of the United States of America require that our armed service personnel be repatriated.

The fullest possible accounting of United States fallen military personnel means repatriating living American POWs and MIAs, accounting for, identifying, and recovering the remains of military personnel who were killed in the line of duty, or providing convincing evidence as to why such a repatriation, accounting, identification, or recovery is not possible.

It is the responsibility of the Federal Government to return to the United States for proper burial and respect all members of the Armed Forces killed in the line of duty who lie in lost graves.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—In light of the findings under subsection (a), Congress—
(1) reaffirms its support for the recovery and return to the United States, the remains and bodies of all members of the Armed Forces killed in the line of duty, and for the efforts by the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command to recover the remains of members of the Armed Forces from all wars, conflicts and missions;

(2) recognizes the courage and sacrifice of all members of the Armed Forces who participated in Operation Highjump and all missions vital to the national security of the United States of America;

(3) acknowledges the dedicated research and efforts by the US Geological Survey, the National Science Foundation, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, the Fallen American Veterans Foundation and all persons and organizations to identify, locate, and advocate for, from their temporary Antarctic grave, the recovery of the well-preserved frozen bodies of Ensign Maxwell Lopez, Naval Aviator, Frederick Williams, Aviation Machinist’s Mate 1ST Class, Wendell Hendersin, Aviation Radioman 1ST Class of the “George 1” explosion and crash; and

(4) encourages the Department of Defense to review the facts, research and to pursue new efforts to undertake all feasible efforts to recover, identify,
and return the well-preserved frozen bodies of the “George 1” crew from Antarctica’s Thurston Island.