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House of Representatives

WALTER ARBIB

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2001

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, today I stand to recognize and salute a dear friend and a wonderful human being, Walter Arbib.

A resident and native of Israel before moving to Canada in 1988, Walter Arbib started his career as an Israeli tourist agent and took advantage of the normalized relations between Israel and Egypt for his business. As his work progressed and new horizons seemed to dawn, Walter came upon the idea of moving his work into the international relief area.

Already, at this point, as co-owner of a number of SkyLink discount travel offices, Walter established his headquarters in Toronto, Canada and was the catalyst for a dream that has grown exponentially since that time. What began as a group of small travel offices has evolved into SkyLink Group which includes SkyLink Express, and air courier business; SkyLink Travel, a discount airline ticket agency; Sishost Corp., an Internet-based application hosting platform; and Dollar Rent-A-Car.

At a cursory glance, the SkyLink group of companies seems no more than an affordable, expansive travel group. However, Walter Arbib's vision has gone much further than simply affordable travel. SkyLink Aviation, Inc. is an internationally licensed operator of aircraft and helicopters which specializes in Air Support Project Management, Air Charters, Aviation Support, Aircraft Maintenance, Air Courier, Executive Aircraft, Flight Planning and Clearance Services. In short, SkyLink supplies much needed air support for humanitarian and other missions throughout the globe.

Walter's clientele has become as diverse as the United Nations (incidentally one of SkyLink's first contracts). Foreign governments, as well as the United States, have hired Walter Arbib and SkyLink to deliver food to refugees, evacuate workers, and fly into dangerous areas to provide aid and transportation.

SkyLink owns approximately fourteen planes and four helicopters, but leases the bulk of its aircraft from a network of companies, sometimes as many as one hundred planes can be involved in any given operation in a matter of hours. Walter's company is always on call. If an emergency request comes through, SkyLink is prepared to act immediately.

Often, Walter doesn't even wait for a call before his aircraft are on their way to participate or spearhead disaster relief halfway across the globe. During severe flooding in Mozambique, SkyLink started to move their helicopters before Walter was even asked. His pro-active approach to work is a combination of good business sense and an understanding of the international need for an operation like SkyLink.

Walter Arbib and SkyLink have received thankful letters and honors from many countries that are greatful for the service that he has provided. SkyLink's work can sometimes deviate from the stated objective. The most illustrative example occurred in 1994 when SkyLink was hired to bring aid to Rwanda, in the midst of war.

During this operation, SkyLink's Operation Manager discovered nine hundred orphans with two aid workers struggling in abysmal working conditions. A decision was quickly made that SkyLink would donate its aircraft and manpower to the first wave of supplies, and would help set up an adequate shelter for the orphans. Back at headquarters, Walter stated matter-of-factly that he had heard this incredible story from his manager, and decided to lend a helping hand, because those children were in the middle of nowhere and the people in the field said that they were not leaving before they had a chance to help. Such devotion and goodwill is ever-pervasive in SkyLink under Arbib's leadership.

Walter Arbib has prospered because of SkyLink's extensive business ventures, but never lost sight of the main reason that this business is such a success on a number of levels. More often than not, the SkyLink symbol can be seen on the helicopters and planes evacuating refugees or bringing aid and supplies to needy citizens of other countries. While this has meant greater profits for Walter, it also fills him with a sense of pride that even in a business venture, comfort and aid can be brought to the needy throughout the world.

The international community is extremely grateful to this humanitarian whose work many times provides the difference of life or death for countless people in the path of danger.

Congratulations
Walter