

**U.S. House of Representatives
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
July 10, 2013**

Testimony of:
Michael L. Lovelady
2308 Franklin Avenue
Nederland, TX 77627

Regarding: Victor L. Lovelady

My name is Michael Lovelady. I was born in Port Arthur, Texas in November 1952. I am retired from the fire service with over 30 years of service. I spent the last 24 years of my career as Fire Chief for the City of Nederland, Texas Fire-Rescue Services. During my career I earned a Master Firefighter and Master Peace Officer certifications from the State of Texas. I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in "Administrative Sciences" from the University of Alabama and an Associate's degree in "Fire Protection Technology" from Lamar University.

On the morning of January 16, 2013, at approximately 3:30 AM, my home phone rang. As usual, a call at this time of the morning does not bring good news.

When my wife answered the phone, a strange voice asked, "Who's speaking?" When my wife refused to give her name, she heard Victor state "Wanda, I'm in trouble, I need Mike." When I answered the phone, Victor stated that "I am in trouble, we have been captured by al-Qaeda and we are tied up." Victor then asked me to tell his wife Maureen about his situation in person, because he did not want her to be alone when she got the news about him. Victor then said "you will know what to do." I advised him that I would notify his wife, and contact the FBI and U.S. State Department.

I attempted to ask him questions about his situation, but he stated that their captors were next to him and he could not answer any questions. We then told each other "bye." That was the last I ever heard from my brother.

Victor was only 57 years old and was my only sibling. Victor and I grew up in Nederland, Texas with wonderful parents that raised us with traditional and solid values that would help us throughout our lives. Our family was the type that did everything together such as going to the beach or the lake. As we grew up and went in different career paths, we did not get to see each other as much as I would have liked. However, we still talked on the phone a lot.

I always considered Victor the genius of the family. I admired his ingenuity and was in awe of his knowledge about electricity and electronics. Victor had two degrees from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. His Bachelor of Science was in "Industrial Engineering" and his Associate's Degree was in "Electricity and Electronics." Victor was a great brother, husband and father. Victor was married to his wife, Maureen, for 33 years. He had two children that he loved so much, Erin, 28 years old and Grant, 21 years old. At this time I'd like to introduce Victor's wife Maureen and his son Grant, my wife Wanda, and my children, Kevin, Jason, and Ashley. Victor's daughter Erin would have liked to have been here today as well but had to have emergency back surgery.

Victor had a heart of gold and would do anything for anyone, especially the elderly. He was a kind and gentle man. Victor was an Industrial Engineer by trade and designed system buildings to control industry operations. He was also a Master Electrician and could do most anything. Most of Victor's life was spent in Nederland, only recently moving to Houston after his children graduated from Nederland High School.

When work in our area slowed down, Victor traveled back and forth to Houston, a 170 mile roundtrip daily for about 3 years so his children could graduate from Nederland High School which was the same school he graduated from in 1973. His son, Grant was a star football player and his daughter, Erin was an assistant softball coach at Nederland High School.

Victor never had a pension plan and always had to pay all of his family's insurance with no input from the company he worked for. He never had more than two weeks off in a

year. However, he longed to be able to retire and spend more time with his wife and children while he was still a relatively young man. When the opportunity to go to work overseas arose, Victor weighed the pro and cons. He was told that he could only work overseas until he was 60 years old. He knew that if he could do this job for 3 years, he would be able to make enough money to retire and be with his family.

He was assured that it was a safe place to work. He told his family and me that he would be safe. He said his plant was in the middle of the desert where no one would go.

After speaking with my brother, I called the State Department's Washington number, to see if they could provide me with more information about his situation. After explaining to them that I had just received a call from Victor, they said they would look into the matter and call me back. The State Department called me back later that morning to confirm that there was an attack. I continued to receive regular calls from both the State Department and the FBI after that. They kept us well informed on Victor's situation on a daily basis and were very respectful. In addition to that, we were visited by agents from Houston, Beaumont, and the New York City offices.

On Saturday, January 19, the FBI came to a family member's house where we had all gathered and told us that Victor had died on January 17. On January 21, at 3:00 am, the State Department and FBI called again asking if there were any identifying marks that could be used to confirm that Victor had passed. I told them Victor had a tattoo of a lightning bolt on his upper left arm. Half an hour after that call we received another call confirming that they had positively identified his body.

About 2 months later in March we got more details of Victor's death. FBI Special Agent, Jessica Ulmer informed us that Victor was killed as the hostages were being moved from one side of the compound to another and Algerian forces launched a raid. I don't know if the Algerian forces took the cars out or if the terrorists blew their vehicles up, but Victor's cause of death was blast injuries. Agent Ulmer has kept in contact with me over the last few months regarding Victor's personnel effects that we hope to recover.

Jessica is a compassionate agent that works hard to complete a task such as this investigation and truly understands the feeling of the family regarding our loss.

I personally want to thank Congressman Ted Poe and his staff for their care and diligence on having Victor's personal effects returned from Algeria. Congressman Poe never forgot our family and he continues to seek justice for the people that lost their lives on that fateful day. Congressman Poe is a true patriot and he makes me proud to be from Texas.

Also, I want to thank Congressman Randy Weber for making sure our needs were met throughout this entire ordeal.

Finally, on behalf of the Lovelady, Buttaccio, and Rowan families, I want to thank Congressman Poe, Congressman Weber and all of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs members for continuing to fight terrorism and keeping Americans safe at home and abroad.