

techniques, who confused interrogators with constantly shifting policies, and that ignored the many voices who told them that what they were doing was unlawful and that it was not the American way. And it extends to the President himself, who has acknowledged publicly that in 2003 he approved meetings of his most senior national security officials to consider and sign off on so-called enhanced interrogation techniques. The abuses that have occurred under this administration's watch have constituted one of the darkest episodes in this Nation's recent history. They have fed growing anger at and opposition to U.S. policies, and in the process have undermined our efforts to combat al-Qaida and associated extremist groups. The next administration will have to work long and hard to undo the damage that has been done to our country's reputation and national security and to restore the rule of law.

RESOURCE FAMILY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ACT

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise today to voice my support for the Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Act of 2008, which was introduced on September 16, 2008, by my good friend Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN of Arkansas. This is an important piece of legislation, and I am proud to be an original cosponsor.

I have long been a member of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption and worked in a bipartisan manner to support adoptive and foster parents and children. In 1997, I strongly advocated for the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act which has made a significant difference in the lives of vulnerable children. Since the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, the number of children adopted out of foster care has more than doubled. In West Virginia alone, more than 3,600 children have been adopted out of the West Virginia foster care system. This is a real victory for these children who deserve the love and comfort of a safe, permanent home.

However, with more than 500,000 children still in foster care, it is clear that more needs to be done. This is why I was so pleased when the Senate passed the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act by unanimous consent. This legislation will provide additional support for grandparents and other relatives who provide a safe home for children in foster care. Additionally, this legislation will allow states to continue to assist older foster children, those who are 18, 19, 20, or 21 years old, so that these children aging out of the system do not have to choose between pursuing an education or working to prevent becoming homeless. I believe that this legislation is another step towards the ultimate goal of each child having a safe, permanent home.

Senator LINCOLN's legislation would also help bring us closer to this goal. A

study conducted in 2005 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that one in five foster homes leaves the system each year. One-fifth of the foster parent population provides 60 to 80 percent of all foster care. Foster parents sacrifice in tremendous ways to provide a home for vulnerable children. The Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Act would support their efforts by awarding grants to States to improve the leadership, support, training, recruitment, and retention of foster care, kinship care, and adoptive parents.

It is my hope that organizations and individuals such as Mr. Dennis Sutton of the Children's Home Society of West Virginia, who has worked tirelessly in his effort to secure a home for all of West Virginia's vulnerable children, will have the financial support to find and retain enough foster parents to make this goal a reality. Foster and adoptive parents will greatly benefit from the Resource Family Recruitment and Retention Act, but the big winners will be the children who are placed loving homes. We need to invest and focus on these families.

AFRICOM

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, today marks the full operational launch of the U.S. Africa Command, known as AFRICOM. I have long supported the idea of a unified regional combatant command for Africa that recognizes the continent's growing strategic importance for U.S. security and that is coordinated with other U.S. agencies. As I have discussed many times on the Senate floor, we can not pretend that weak and failing states, protracted violent conflicts, maritime insecurity, narcotics and weapons trafficking, large-scale corruption, and the misappropriation and exploitation of natural resources are not relevant to our long-term interests. At the same time, there are exciting economic and social developments underway across Africa that provide openings for the United States to help save lives, strengthen governance institutions, and build long-term partnerships. It is not a question of whether the United States needs to work proactively and collaboratively with African nations in these areas but a question of how we should do so to maximize our efficacy while minimizing potential backlash.

Toward that end, the standup of AFRICOM presents both opportunities and risks. Indisputably, our Nation's military strength is one of our greatest assets and may be necessary to deal with some of the emerging national and transnational threats, such as narcotics trafficking, piracy, and terrorism. Military training, equipping, and logistical support are essential to develop strong, disciplined national militaries and also strengthen regional peacekeeping, especially with African Union missions currently operating in Somalia and Sudan. Furthermore, in

many postconflict societies, such as Liberia, our military expertise can assist in demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration while also helping to rebuild that country's army.

However, while militaries make important contributions in these areas, they are insufficient to address the underlying causes of violence and instability in Africa. Lasting security requires reconciling political grievances, improving governance, strengthening the rule of law, and promoting economic development: tasks for which our military, or any military for that matter, cannot be the lead. To advance and support those tasks, the United States needs to continue to invest in our diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and development capacities on the continent. We need a unified interagency approach to these challenges in which AFRICOM is supporting, not eclipsing, the work of our diplomats, our aid workers, and other key partners.

I am concerned that the opposite is happening. Despite initial ambitions to have 25 percent of AFRICOM's headquarters' positions filled by non-military staff, that number has been severely reduced because of resource and staffing limitations in civilian agencies. Furthermore, a report by the Government Accountability Office published this July stated that concerns persist among civilian agencies and nongovernmental organizations that the military is becoming the lead for U.S. policy in Africa. Even as Pentagon officials claim this is not their intention, it is hard to argue with the numbers. While civilian agencies operating abroad continue to face resource constraints, more and more resources are being invested in military relationships and assistance in Africa.

Given this context, it is not surprising that some are casting AFRICOM's emergence as a signal of further militarization of U.S. Africa policy. Such perceptions of militarization are dangerous and risk undermining our ability to engage local populations. As I have said many times, the military has a critical role to play in helping Africans address their security challenges, but we must be careful that it does not outweigh or overshadow other forms of engagement. This is especially true in cases where local security forces are engaging in repressive tactics or committing serious human rights abuses, such as in Chad or Ethiopia. In these cases, we run a very real risk that U.S. military engagement could be seen by local populations as complicit in those abuses and become a target of resulting grievances. Before we jump at short-term opportunities to exert military influence, we need to consider seriously the long-term risks to U.S. stature and interests.

Mr. President, this is not to say that AFRICOM is not capable of such nuanced strategic planning and interagency coordination. I have met with

General Ward and know that he is aware of both the opportunities and risks as AFRICOM stands up. I still believe that a unified regional combatant command can contribute to broader U.S. Government efforts to confront the many security challenges in Africa and can provide additional tools to pursue coherent and strategic objectives across the continent. But to fulfill that potential, AFRICOM must demonstrate in its inaugural months and years that it recognizes the unique political realities throughout Africa, concentrates on its defined mandate, and takes its lead from our diplomats. Simultaneously, we in Congress must act to ensure that our diplomats have the resources they need to take that lead in formulating and implementing comprehensive U.S. strategies in Africa.

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of National Adoption Day and National Adoption Month. Senator COLEMAN and I understand that the Senate passed our resolution recognizing National Adoption Day and National Adoption Month. I stand before you today and challenge every Member of Congress to take this opportunity to be the voice for children who do not necessarily have someone to speak for them.

As chair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, I strongly believe that "there is no such thing as an unwanted child, just unfound families." The Hague Convention recognizes "that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding." Unfortunately, not all children have a family of their own, but through adoption our children have the opportunity to find their "forever family."

Nearly half of all Americans have been touched by adoption, and last year more than 4,200 children became members of permanent loving families through adoption celebrations that were held in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. I commend every State for its efforts, but we still have miles to go.

Between 2002 and 2007, approximately 4.8 million children were serviced by the U.S. foster care system, and only 310,000 of them were adopted by "forever families." Children in foster care are some of the most vulnerable members of our society, and we must do everything in our power to make sure they have the necessary tools to live a normal healthy life. As Members of Congress we have taken a stance in helping children move from foster care to permanent, adoptive homes by passing the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. However, National Adoption Day gives us the chance to experience firsthand the joys that adoption brings to the lives of our children and their families.

President Bush has recognized the importance of adoption to children and our Nation. That is why he declares November to be National Adoption Month. This year National Adoption Day occurs on November 15 as a part of National Adoption Month. National Adoption Day is an event to raise awareness of the 129,000 children in foster care who are waiting for permanent families. Since the first National Adoption Day in 2000, nearly 20,000 children have joined "forever families" on this special day. This year we hope to have events in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

I want you to picture what happens on this fall day, children running, laughing, and playing with their new parent. Think about a girl or boy planning their special outfit and joyously awaiting the family celebration. Imagine the excitement welling up inside of a child as she looks into her new parent's eyes and knows she is finally part of a family. She will never dread the sound of a car coming to take her away again or wonder where she will lay her head or which school she will be moved to.

Now picture the other dramatically different reality. There are approximately 513,000 current foster care children in the United States, and 114,000 of them are waiting for adoption. Since 1987, the number of children in foster care has nearly doubled, and the average time a child remains in foster care has lengthened to nearly 3 years. Each year, approximately 24,000 children in foster care will age out of the system without ever being placed with a permanent family.

According to a survey by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, many potential adoptive parents have considered foster care adoption, but "a majority of Americans hold misperceptions about the foster care adoption process and the children who are eligible for adoption." For example, "two-thirds of those considering foster care adoption are unnecessarily concerned that biological parents can return to claim their children and nearly half of all Americans mistakenly believe that foster care adoption is expensive, when in reality adopting from foster care is without substantial cost."

Most foster children entered into State custody because their parents were either unable or unwilling to care for them. Not only are children separated from parents, but in many cases, siblings are separated when they are placed in foster care. Over half the children in foster care are 10 years of age or older and have more difficulty being adopted. These children are just waiting to flourish with the right parent's guidance.

In Louisiana there are 4,541 children in foster care and 1,162 of them are waiting to be adopted. I would like to share with you how foster care and adoption has affected some of our children in Louisiana.

Ian is 15 years old and first entered foster care at the age of 5 due to physical abuse and lack of supervision by his mother. Ian's mother surrendered her parental rights, and he and his three sisters were placed for adoption. Ian's younger sisters were adopted by their foster parents.

In November 2006, Ian was placed in a specialized foster home after completing a facility program. This family has worked very closely with Ian in learning to trust others, making appropriate choices, on becoming part of a family unit, and being able to "attach" to others in preparation of an adoptive family. Ian is working very hard to adjust to a "traditional family lifestyle" and is progressing well in this family setting. Ian states he wants an adoptive family that says, "You are our child and we will not turn you away."

Ian is very personable and is looking for acceptance in life. He is polite, affectionate, and very adventurous. Ian enjoys playing basketball, riding bikes, reading Harry Potter books, and playing video games. Numerous recruitment efforts for an adoptive home have been made since Ian was placed in the specialized foster home, but an adoptive family has not been found to date. One of the greatest barriers to adoption is a lack of resources of prospective adoptive families willing to adopt older children.

While Ian is still desperately searching for someone to love and care for him, Christopher, through all of his struggles, has found that sense of permanency. Christopher is 12 years old and first entered foster care at the age of 2 months. He was subject to abuse by his biological father that resulted in a skull fracture, subdural hematoma, bruises, bites, and burns. Christopher had many developmental delays and problematic behaviors requiring placement in specialized foster homes. Christopher's removal was requested by several foster placements because of behavioral issues. In June 2006, a foster parent who had provided respite for Christopher was asked to consider the fostering of Christopher as the child had formed a very strong bond to this foster parent and her children during his respite visits. Upon placement in this home, drastic improvements were noted in Christopher's behavior, socialization, academic achievements, and physical health. In all appearances, Christopher was now functioning in the normal range for his age and with minimal evidence of neurological impairment. Christopher's neurologist continued to marvel at Christopher's functioning considering the extensive injuries he had suffered as an infant.

One day while the adoption social worker was visiting with Christopher and his foster mother, Christopher said he wanted to change his name to "Kantrell." The social worker responded "Kantrell (and Christopher's last name), that does sound nice." Christopher replied no, "Kantrell" and the last name of his foster mother. The