

which \$22.8 million is for cybersecurity education and awareness. The increase will continue efforts to combat the cyber threat by reducing points of access to Federal computer networks, enhancing intrusion detection through Einstein, and building a cybersecurity workforce through education and training.

So it remains the responsibility of each generation to make the necessary investments to secure our homeland. I take this responsibility seriously, and my members take it seriously as part of our Homeland Security Committee. We worked very hard to produce a good bill for the country. We are proud of this bill. It is about \$40 billion of their money. I hope they believe we are allocating it and spending it accordingly.

Mr. President, I look forward to the hearings we are going to have next year on some important topics, and I will close by wishing you and the staff and everyone here a merry Christmas and a happy and blessed holiday.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RUBIO. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMPACTS TO THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Mr. RUBIO. It is a pleasure to be here. This will be my last speech of the year. As I said yesterday in another speech, it has been an extraordinary honor and privilege to serve in the Senate. I look forward to the next 5 years of doing that, God willing. It is a phenomenal institution and I am proud to be a part of it, even though some days make you scratch your head.

I am here on two things before we close out the year. I have a specific interest on items that impact the Western Hemisphere.

I wish to take this opportunity to say that one of the real treats of the last year is being able to work with Senator MENENDEZ on the Western Hemispheric Committee. We share a lot of views in common, and even on the ones we don't we have a very cooperative working relationship. It has been a great experience working with him on that, and I look forward to more of that next year on that committee and with everyone on Foreign Relations.

I know there are a lot of big domestic issues happening, but the things around the world matter. They matter a lot to us. I know when times are tough economically, sometimes we wonder: Why should we care what is happening halfway around the world?

We are not Luxembourg, with all due respect to Luxembourg. We are the United States of America. What that means is that virtually every aspect of our life is directly impacted by things that are happening sometimes halfway around the world.

One of the things that is always in our interest is the promotion of freedom and democracy. It is one of the things that sets us apart from other nations. Our greatest export is the American example, the fact that people look to this country and see it is possible for people to have self-government.

I know self-government and this Republic sometimes look messy from the outside looking in. As I tell people often, if you saw the way some of your food is made, you wouldn't eat it. I think sometimes when you look at the political process and the lights that shine on it, there are some things about it and the process that I don't like and you don't like. But it is still better than virtually any other form of government that has ever existed on the Earth. We are all privileged and blessed to be able to live in this Republic. Any time we have the opportunity to speak out on behalf of democracy and freedom, we should.

I had, this week, the opportunity to engage on that issue, and I wish to publicly acknowledge the work of Under Secretary Sherman, who has spent a lot of time talking to me this week about Nicaragua and about elections in Nicaragua that were, in my opinion, fraudulent and unfortunate because the rest of the hemisphere is moving toward democracy, the rest of the hemisphere is moving toward free and fair elections. In Latin America, sometimes people whom we don't agree with win elections, people who don't like us, who believe the national interests of their country are contrary to ours. But the people chose them.

Unfortunately, what happened in Nicaragua is grotesque. This person Daniel Ortega, who was a Sandinista, who was once a dictator of that country, basically has ignored the Constitution and ran for office again. There were extraordinary irregularities. The Carter Center, for example, wasn't allowed to come in and observe it. The OAS has already talked about real problems with that election and we hope to see their report soon.

Let me publicly acknowledge the time and effort the Department of State spent talking to me on the phone about ensuring that the United States is a forceful voice on behalf of democracy and freedom in Nicaragua and in the hemisphere. I appreciate their work on that behalf, and I know we are looking forward to the OAS's report fairly soon.

Senator MENENDEZ and I have filed a resolution in this institution that I hope we will pass that recognizes the need for this country to stand firmly on the side of the Nicaraguan people on behalf of freedom and democracy.

There is another topic I touched upon the other day; that is, the people-to-people travel to Cuba. I kind of went through these itineraries a couple days ago that show basically what these trips are all about is nothing more than tourism—just tourism. It is just people going to Cuba.

The reason why this is problematic is because it gives money to the Castro government.

Today in the Miami Herald is a very disturbing article. The article is from Juan Tamayo, who is a reporter who writes for the El Nuevo Herald and Miami Herald:

Cuban dissidents have sent out photos and videos of a large police crackdown in the eastern town of Palma Soriano that left at least five government opponents with head wounds, black eyes and other injuries.

One photo of the Dec. 2 roundup of 46 dissidents shows Henry Perales with two wounds on his shaved head that required nine stitches to close. Another shows AbrahamCQ Cabrera with one stitch on his forehead.

"That wound bled a lot because it was on a blood vessel, but it was a kick to the ribs on the right side that made me fall to the ground. . . . It still hurts," Cabrera told El Nuevo Herald by phone from Palma Soriano.

The images were sent to the newspaper by Luis Enrique Ferrer Garcia, U.S. representative of the dissident Cuban Patriotic Union. His brother, former political prisoner Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia, heads the Union and was one of the men arrested in the Palma Soriano crackdown.

Union members and supporters took two weeks to smuggle out the photos and the videos, via emails, because they had to work slowly and carefully to avoid police agents who were trying to find and seize the images, Luis Enrique said.

The Palma Soriano roundup was one of the largest and harshest police crackdowns on dissidents in recent years. All were freed hours or days later—one of them 12 days later—without charges.

Forty-six men had gathered in a Palma Soriano house starting on Nov. 30 with plans to stage a street protest two days later to demand the release of all political prisoners and respect for human rights.

Those sound like pretty reasonable requests to me, release of political prisoners and respect of human rights. This is what they were going to protest on behalf of.

Cell phone videos shot inside the house showed many of the dissidents saying they wanted to show they were not U.S. paid "mercenaries," as the government brands them, but rather "defenders of human rights."

The unidentified narrator of some of the videos referred to the police already deployed outside "and the repression that awaits us."

So these protesters knew what was about to happen. They have seen this before. This is what happens in Cuba when you speak out in favor of human rights and against political prisoners. You get your head cracked open. These guys knew this was going to happen, but yet they had the bravery to go forward with it.

Police indeed arrested the dissidents as they left the house in groups of four and five, and a video taken from a second-story balcony showed them punching some of the protesters and forcing them onto a U.S.-styled

yellow school bus parked at the end of the block.

Cabrera said the bus driver, dressed in civilian clothes, hit him as well as Perales and several other dissidents with a wrench once inside the bus.

The bus driver hit them with a wrench once they got inside the bus.

Other photos show dissidents Misael Valdes Diaz and Alexis Yanch OICQ with black eyes and Emilio Dinza with a large bump on his forehead. Other dissidents reported black and blues from police strikes.

Angel Moya, a former political prisoner who was reported beaten in a police station after his arrest in Palma Soriano Dec. 2, said police punched him on the way from the house to the school bus but not afterwards.

How nice of them not to punch him afterwards.

Moya said Friday that he spent 12 days in a police lockup, in a cell that was smelly and had no water or lights and that he shared with common criminals.

This is Cuba. I doubt this experience is something these tourists traveling on U.S. licenses are going to get to see on their next visit to Cuba.

The other day I talked about one of these visits that the United States has licensed called Ethics and the Cuban Revolution. How interesting—Ethics and the Cuban Revolution.

I wonder if part of that ethics course will be a part about schoolbus drivers dressed as civilians hitting protesters with a wrench. I wonder if that is part of their itinerary. I wonder if the part about cracking people's heads open because they are going to peacefully protest in the street is part of the itinerary in this Ethics and the Cuban Revolution.

Why do I bring this up again? No. 1, it is outrageous. It should be denounced, and this is a great forum to do it because the world needs to know what happens 90 miles from our shores. It is one of the most repressive regimes in the Western Hemisphere's history. It is still in place. It is still ongoing. But here is No. 2. Where do they get the money to pay these people? Don't you think those guys are getting paid, the civilian busdriver is getting paid to hit people with a wrench or do you think he is doing it for free? How are they paying these police officers? How do you get people to do this stuff? You have to pay them. Where do they get their money to pay them?

Their government is a fiasco. They don't know anything about the economy. Do you want to know why the Cuban economy is in the tank? It is because the people who run Cuba are incompetent. They have no idea about what a modern economy looks like or how to create one, apart from the fact that they cling to a broken ideology.

So where do they get the money to pay for all these things? Sadly, where they are getting a lot of the money to pay for these things is from us. It is from people who live in this country who are curious about what happens in Cuba, who are curious—and some who outright sympathize with this idea that somehow Cuba is this socialist

paradise—and they travel there and they leave money there. All these trips, Cuba gets a huge take, and they use it to fund this repressive apparatus.

As I said the other day, I understand and I don't have any false illusions that the President is going to change his travel policy toward Cuba or this people-to-people program. But at least make sure these programs are furthering what you say you are trying to further, which is bringing freedom and democracy to Cuba, instead of being a source of hard currency and hard revenue.

A few days ago, I denounced two specific itineraries. I didn't denounce 5 or 10; I pointed out 2 of the most outrageous ones on this floor in a speech I gave. Then I sent that to the State Department and said: Would you look at this for me? They responded that they would. They told me they would send me a letter. In fact, in conversations I had, they gave me great hope that in fact they too were troubled by these itineraries and that they would start to look at these more seriously.

Sadly, as a result of what they told me—because one of the things that has been going on around here is I had placed a hold on two nominations in the Western Hemisphere as a result of their inaction on this issue.

After I spoke to them on the phone, I was hopeful about it and I lifted those holds. We were going to vote on those today. Then I got this letter today that, to summarize, basically says: Thank you for your letter, but we can't talk to you about it.

That is not what I expected to get, and so we are going to hold those nominations again until we take this seriously.

This is a problem. This is a problem. We have these companies in America that are advertising tourism to Cuba—tourism that is not just a source of irritation, it is a source of hard currency. It is the money this regime is using to crack people's heads, to pay so-called busdrivers to beat people with wrenches. It is the money they are using to stick people in jails with common criminals, with no access to food or water for 12 days, without charges. We are funding a repressive regime through these practices, and it has to stop. Someone better take this seriously. When they take this seriously, then we can talk.

I hope where we are headed here in the coming year is that we will stand not just on the side of the Cuban people's desire for freedom and democracy—no political prisoners, respect for human rights—but stand for that in the hemisphere and the world, because our voice still matters, and I hope this country will always stand firm on those issues.

Before I left today, I wanted to stand on the floor and talk about this because it is something very important to me and should be important to our country. I hope in the coming year we

will have the opportunity in our Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere and in this body and in our conversations with the White House and State Department to bring these programs into focus. This people-to-people program is a sham. Maybe they are very well intentioned but some of these trips are nothing more than tourism that plows millions of dollars into the hands of one of the most disgusting and grotesque, repressive apparatuses this hemisphere has ever seen, and it has to stop. Someone has to start cracking down on these people, someone has to start cracking down on these agencies, someone has to start cracking down on these trips, and make sure they do what they are intended to do, and that is real access to the ways of freedom, to the ways of opportunity, to opening the eyes of the Cuban people to the fact that the rest of the world does not live under what they live under—even though most of the Cuban people already know that.

It is time we start holding these people accountable. If they are filing these licenses under false pretenses, they need to be prosecuted, their licenses need to be suspended. They have to be barred from having these trips. We have to have people actively monitoring these itineraries that are being sold. We need to match their applications for these licenses, and we need to stop approving licenses for these tourist trips.

I hope we will make progress on that in 2012 and I hope that is what we will focus on in the year to come.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BOARMAN NOMINATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me wish you and your family and all those who work here a merry Christmas and happy new year. I hope God gives you and your families a very good, outstanding, happy, healthy new year.

I wish to speak on William Boarman's appointment as Public Printer, which has been held up for a year and a half, despite being reported out of the Rules Committee twice with unanimous bipartisan support. Earlier this year, because of the delays, he was appointed to the job on an interim basis by the President during a recess. During this year he has done an outstanding job as Acting Public Printer.

It is extremely unfortunate that this agency, which is so important to Congress, to the private sector printing industry, and to the country, will now be without an effective leader when Mr. Boarman's recess appointment expires after we adjourn, unless this Senate confirms his nomination at last.