

combatant command that has responsibility for this region, but it has been given zero ships needed to conduct countertrafficking missions in the Caribbean. Why is that?

Unfortunately, the Navy fleet is too small, and the Navy doesn't have enough ships to commit to this region in light of the growing array of national security threats around the globe. Even though the U.S. Coast Guard has stepped up and provided a variety of ships, their fleet also has limitations. It is aging and small.

Other nations have noticed our hands-off approach in this region and around the world. Just like the Middle East, our adversaries, like Russia, are happy to fill the power vacuum left by an America that they see in retreat. At least four times last year Russia had more naval ships in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility than we did—four times. That is our backyard. What were those Russian ships doing there? Most likely they were conducting intelligence collection missions. This is simply unacceptable and an invitation to even further confrontation and perhaps even conflict. We have obvious national interests in this part of the world, and they include putting a stop to the trafficking of illegal drugs that end up poisoning and often killing Americans.

If we can't even accurately patrol the Caribbean with our own vessels, we clearly have a problem. Let me be clear. We are not asking or talking about multibillion-dollar aircraft carriers or ballistic missile submarines but rather smaller ships that can help launch and recover helicopters to help interdict the growing shipment of drugs in the region.

SOUTHCOM simply needs to be better resourced if it is going to make a dent in the rampant trafficking of drugs that ruin American lives once they reach our border. General Kelly, the former head of the Southern Command, has testified previously that too often his troops have to simply sit and watch the drugs come into the United States across the Caribbean because they simply don't have the resources to interdict it and to stop it.

While the men and women of SOUTHCOM's Joint Interagency Task Force South are doing yeoman's work in this area, they can't fully succeed in taking down the trafficking networks if we don't give them the resources to do so.

As we continue to work hard for the American people, I hope we will take a serious look at the shortfall in our military budgets for countertrafficking missions. We can't just look at the devastation wrought by heroin and prescription opioid abuse in the Northeast without looking at the supply of the very heroin that is killing Americans and addicting them to a miserable existence, one that threatens not only their life and their families but our communities. We need to focus on the supply side and better equip the men

and women tasked with the difficult job of protecting our country and our people from these transnational threats.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Washington.

TRADE FACILITATION AND TRADE ENFORCEMENT BILL

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon with my colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, to talk about an important national security measure that was passed in today's Customs bill that the conference report included and was voted out of the Senate. The Customs bill included an important provision that was authored by myself and Senator COLLINS in December of last year. Called S. 2430, the Travel Facilitation and Safety Act, it concerned how to improve biometric standards for visa waiver countries. Senator COLLINS and I focused on two things: increasing security standards for those visa waiver countries that we believe should use better biometrics and share that information and data, and improving security at our airports before people reach the United States, so we can know that we have done a thorough background check and evaluation.

Senator COLLINS and I want to stop potential terrorists before they board a plane bound for the United States.

I thank Secretary Jeh Johnson for working with us in December on S. 2430, and also for helping to get this included in the Customs bill.

What we want to do is expand the customs and border security efforts that exist here in the United States and, if you will, expand our border controls to overseas airports. After the Paris attacks reignited a national discussion about what to do to improve U.S. security, we wanted to make sure that we do something specifically for those individuals traveling from 38 visa waiver countries. These are countries for whose citizens we do not require a full background check on individuals prior to coming to the United States. I know the Senator from Maine understands commerce. From the perspective of my home State, I know that we appreciate the free flow of people and commerce. It is something we depend on for our economy, but our economy also depends on the security of a travel system to catch bad actors before they reach the shores of the United States.

Currently, manifests are checked by Homeland Security when passengers board a plane bound for the United States. Airline personnel perform some checks as well, but when no U.S. visa is required for travel to the United States, there is less scrutiny on those travelers before they reach U.S. shores, when they go through customs.

This is something we sought to address. With an ever-changing security landscape around the world and the challenges that we face with ISIS, it is

very important to continue to upgrade our security regime.

Earlier this week, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper warned that ISIS is likely to try to attack the United States this year, so we must continue to do everything we can to make our country safe. Two incidents highlight the need for expanding the border protection outside the United States of America.

One EU citizen, Mehdi Nemouche, was radicalized through multiple stints in prison. After he was released, he was able to cover his tracks and fly from the EU to Syria. He was able to carry out an attack on a Jewish museum when he came back to Brussels, even though he was on an EU watch list, because he was not placed under ongoing surveillance. Nothing in his travel through airports helped him to be deterred.

German officials notified the French of his appearance in Frankfurt after returning from several weeks in Southeast Asia, having since departed Syria. There was no record of his having traveled to Syria as an EU resident, so he was allowed to come back into Germany and travel through Europe's common border zone. It was from there he entered Belgium unchecked to carry out his attacks.

In addition, one of the masterminds behind the Paris attacks traveled back and forth between Belgium and Syria multiple times, even though he was known to French intelligence. His mobile phone was traced to Greece because of a call he made to an extremist group in Belgium. We don't know exactly how he crossed into Greece from Syria, but we do know that there are holes in the system that terrorists can exploit.

Senator COLLINS and I first started working on the issue of biometric standards and improving our security with visa waiver countries several years ago after the Renshaw case, in which an individual from Algeria went to France and from France to Canada, making up a new identity every step of the way. He then made it to the U.S. border in Washington State at Port Angeles and made up a new identity as a Canadian citizen. Thank God a customs and border security agent was smart enough to realize something was amiss, and when they checked the trunk of the car, they found explosives that he had planned to use to blow up LAX.

Today's legislation makes sure our physical border checks are moved to overseas airports so that U.S. law enforcement officials will be there on the ground to check for those people who are slipping through the European regime and may try to board an airplane bound for the United States of America.

It is very important that we continue to strengthen our security regime, and I believe there is more that we can do. Our bill, S. 2430, would have allowed

Customs and Border Protection to expand preclearance operations at targeted airports where we are concerned that the U.S. has a full partnership. If you have traveled outside of the United States of America and then return, you are very well aware of what happens to you at Customs—something like what is depicted in this photo where somebody is asking you for your passport information and background. Many of these operations have continued to be improved, including at Dulles airport. Through a pilot program, they now have the latest and greatest biometric technology that allows for enhanced fingerprint identification, facial recognition pictures, and a variety of things that are making our air travel more secure. We would like to do the same thing at U.S. preclearance operations abroad, and we will keep working to do just that.

We would like to see customs and border operations, which is U.S. law enforcement on the ground, at partnership airports for places such as the United Kingdom, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and Turkey, even though it is not a visa waiver country, because it is a transit point between Syria and Europe.

The language in the bill today shows that Congress supports efforts to strengthen the security of our border checks by stretching them overseas to these operations. Again, I appreciate Secretary Johnson's committed insight to constantly improving our border security. He and his agency have been working hard to constantly upgrade our security. He engaged in a conversation with Senator COLLINS and me last December on this legislation, and he has continued to help us get this language into the Customs bill that we just voted on.

I so appreciate Senator COLLINS' focus on this issue for many years as the head of the Homeland Security Committee. She has since turned that responsibility over to Senator JOHNSON, and he has also been focused on these issues. I just want to thank her for working with me on this legislation over several years. In 2010, we tried to improve the biometric standard for visa waiver countries and passed strong legislation out of the Senate. Unfortunately, it was watered down to a lesser standard. Yet it did start the efforts on more aggressive biometric travel infrastructure with our visa waiver partners.

In our bill, S. 2430, we try to set up new biometric pilot projects that will work with our partners overseas and test out the best biometrics we can use. That provision was not included today, but it's something we will keep working on.

We know ISIS has set up operations and is continuing to focus on these visa waiver countries, as well, like the U.K. and Belgium, and we know it is active in Turkey. Giving the best technologies and tools to our partner countries and working on counterintel-

ligence is very important. Having trained U.S. law enforcement officials working with our partner airports is important for U.S. travelers, U.S. businesses, international commerce, and for travel and the airline industry in general. The fact that customs agents can conduct interviews, capture biometrics, and conduct behavioral analysis before travelers come to the United States of America helps improve the security of our system.

Customs and Border Patrol has announced they want to increase the number of these preclearance-screened travelers by a considerable percent by 2024. This will help us protect the ever-growing traveling population—and know that we are doing a better job before people reach the shores of the United States.

We know with a U.S. law enforcement presence overseas that we will increase security. Customs and Border Patrol turned away nearly 10,000 people seeking admission to the United States. That is 29 people per day. I am not saying all of these people were terrorists. Some had expired documents or otherwise inadmissible information, but the key fact is that preclearance worked. It worked in helping to prevent people that should not have been here from coming to the United States.

Existing U.S. Customs and preclearance operations have stopped some suspected terrorists from reaching our country, and that is why we are so glad we passed this legislation and hope that it will be moved throughout the process to the President's desk and quickly signed.

I also want to thank all of our colleagues and the managers of the legislation for including this in the bill. I thank all those who work at our U.S. border and U.S. Customs and Border Protection—like the person at the Washington State border who helped catch the Millennium Bomber, Ahmed Ressaam, before he could harm Americans.

I again thank the Senator from Maine for her constant work with me on this issue and for her focus on U.S. security. She and I know this job is not done. She and I would go even further in this effort, but we are at least glad we are expanding our border controls to these overseas airports, making U.S. travel safer and protecting people by not letting people come to the United States who pose a security threat.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, it is a great pleasure to join the Senator from Washington State, Ms. CANTWELL, in discussing some very important provisions that were included in the Customs conference report that the Senate acted on earlier this afternoon.

As Senators representing border States, we are particularly attuned to the security and economic consequences of our border security policies. When it comes to travel, our

country's goals should be to let our friends in and to keep our enemies out. As the Senator from Washington so eloquently described, the best way for us to do that is to push out our borders.

Today, approximately 15 percent of travelers boarding an airplane destined for the United States do so only after fully clearing U.S. Customs and immigration inspections at 15 Department of Homeland Security preclearance facilities located in foreign airports. That is a start, but it doesn't go far enough. If we truly want to enhance our security, we need to advance the use of preclearance facilities in other foreign airports, and that is exactly what the Senator from Washington and I would do and what the Senate voted to do today. As Senator CANTWELL has described, it is something that we have long worked on together as a team for many years, and I am very pleased with the progress we can point to today.

Now, let me just briefly explain how preclearance works. Under the preclearance program, we station U.S. law enforcement officials overseas at foreign airports. There they can screen passengers at the point of departure to the United States rather than waiting for the passengers to arrive in the United States. Well, that makes all the sense in the world. It helps to prevent someone—a terrorist—from smuggling a bomb onto a plane. It helps make the no-fly list more effective. It helps Federal law enforcement to do a scan of other terrorist databases to see if a passenger is listed.

In addition, the unique biometric information of each passenger is also collected before the flight departs to our country rather than after it has arrived. Again, it is this concept of pushing back our borders so that more screening is done overseas. We are doing this more with cargo, also, that is shipped on those cargo ships coming into our ports. It makes all the sense in the world. The security feature is particularly important because biometric information is so much more difficult to fake than biographic information such as the name or a date of birth, which can easily, regrettably, be falsified. As a result of the preclearance operations, threats to aviation security and to our country and its people can be identified at the earliest opportunity.

Accelerating the expansion of preclearance operations incurs minimal costs and great benefits. Instead, new preclearance operations overseas are often paid for by the foreign airport authorities in exchange for the opportunity to offer passengers an improved travel experience returning home.

Think of it, I say to my colleagues. When we come back from a long overseas flight and then we see that long line to go through Customs and immigration, wouldn't we rather do that on the front end of the flight when we are fresher and before that long flight

home? This is advantageous for our foreign visitors, as well as increasing our security.

The conference report passed by the Senate today thus represents an important step forward in strengthening our security. It will help to strengthen the security of travel to the United States. It does not represent our entire bill.

The Cantwell-Collins bill also has enhanced information sharing between the United States and Europe regarding the identities of suspected terrorists. If our intelligence community can provide more information to European border authorities and they can use it in the screening of the more than 1 million migrants that are arriving in Europe, we simultaneously improve the security of Europe and of the United States.

The continued threat posed to aviation from terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, like ISIS, and so many others demands that we take immediate steps to improve our security, keeping our borders and our aviation industry safe but, most of all, keeping the American people safe. Today's vote on the Customs bill conference report is a significant step in the right direction.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which is headed by our colleague Senator RON JOHNSON, as well as the Department of Homeland Security, headed by Secretary Jeh Johnson. Both of them have also worked hard on the preclearance issue.

I hope that our colleagues will join Senator CANTWELL and me as we continue the work we have been doing for the past 5 years on this issue. It is so important. As border State Senators, I think we are particularly sensitive to the fact that we want tourists, we want trade, we want people to come into this country, but we do not want lax border security to allow those who would do us harm to be able to enter this country.

Let me end where I began. Our goal is to keep our enemies out and invite our friends in when it comes to travel. I want to commend Senator CANTWELL for her longstanding leadership on this issue. It has been a pleasure to work with her.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

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

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

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, this week the President unveiled his budget for fiscal year 2017, and it landed here in the Senate with a big thud.

This is not the first time that has happened. In fact, when the President's budget has been brought up for a vote by the 100 Members of the Senate, it has never received more than 1 vote. Both Democrats and Republicans have roundly rejected the President's proposals. Why? Overspending and over-taxation, driving us ever deeper into debt—nobody wants to put their name to that. Yet that is the situation we are in. We are in that situation because of the irresponsible policies that have been laid upon the American people and put into law by this President and by those who have supported him.

Despite numerous efforts over the past several years to address this ever-growing threat to our future, all of these efforts—some of them bipartisan, even—have been rejected by the President. They have failed due to the President's unwillingness to work with the Congress and to put us on a path to fiscal solvency.

Now, I have been a part of that effort now for the last 5 years. All of us throw our hands up in frustration as we watch the debt clock click away ever faster, as we watch the debt rising ever greater.

When the President took office, our national debt—the money we had to pay back—was \$10.6 trillion. It is almost impossible to describe what \$1 trillion is. Trust me; it is a lot of money. It was \$10.6 trillion. Today, it is over \$19 trillion—nearly double—just in the term of this President. And what have we done about it? Nothing. Some will say a little bit. We have touched on it a little bit, but it continues to rise.

The Congressional Budget Office, a nonpartisan organization that just does the numbers, has told us that in 10 years the debt will rise to well over \$27 trillion. The shocker is the amount of money that has to be spent in paying interest on the debt. Nobody is giving us this money for free. We have to pay interest on it because people want interest, and they want their principal back. The interest on that, plus the mandatory spending—that is, automatic spending over which we have no control here unless we put reforms in place—will consume 99 percent of all the taxes and revenue that is coming in to pay for these programs. So that means we won't be building any roads; we won't be repairing any roads. That means we won't be providing research capabilities to the National Institutes of Health or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That means we won't have money for viable programs in the fields of education, commerce, and transportation. Ninety-nine percent is all revenue consumed by just these two items: the mandatory spending—which we have lost control over and refuse to take reform actions to address—and the interest that has to be paid.

Well, this is unsustainable. It will all come down with a crash. That is why the President's budget this year will be

soundly rejected and will only receive one vote, if it gets that.

I am not giving up. I am looking at the major reforms that are necessary, even if we start today, even in an election year. I personally think the public is way ahead of us on this, and they will reward people who stand up and tell them the truth: Folks, we are going broke, and here are the numbers. This isn't political; these are pure numbers that come out of a neutral office. Nevertheless, we will see whether or not those who are running for office will take up the cause.

So I thought: Well, OK, we can't do the big stuff. Can we at least look at waste, fraud, and abuse? Can we not at least encourage my colleagues to take things that have been presented to us—examples of waste, fraud, and abuse by inspectors general, by the Congressional Budget Office, by the Government Accountability Office that looks into all the ways in which we spend money—can't we at least do that? So for the last 33 weeks, starting in the last session and moving into this session, I have been coming to the floor every week to highlight yet another documented example of waste, fraud, and abuse. This is the 33rd time.

Today, this one involves the sum of \$25 billion that has not been properly accounted for by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services. I spoke with the Secretary this morning about it. There are 25 recommendations as to how the Department can address this matter, and she is committed to that. I know she has the right intent, and we will see if it can be accomplished.

In this particular case private sector contractors partner with the CMS, or the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, to provide any number of products and services to beneficiaries—those on Medicaid and Medicare. Federal agencies that administer the contracts are required to track the contracts' progress and costs and then close out these accounts once the contracts are finalized. There comes the rub. The regulations give a grace period of up to 20 months in order to close out a contract—to get everything closed down and so forth on these contracts. There is a handful of extensions where maybe it takes a little bit longer to do that. The timeframe or the grace period is intended to prevent improper payments and reduce the agency's financial risk and then close it out.

The inspector general looked at all this and said: Great idea, good regulation—but it is not happening. In December the Health and Human Services inspector general issued a report of the investigation into these terminated contracts. There are over 6,000 contracts that have been completed, but \$25 billion in funding is overdue—meaning that the accounts haven't been closed, which makes CMS vulnerable to improper payments.

Sadly, 15 percent of the completed contracts remained overdue for more