

restricted PPS GPS satellite signals and to prevent spoofing. While sensitive, the ability of potential adversaries to exploit the system are limited. The SAASM chip goes through a special process of loading encryption signals and unique access codes keyed to the customer country. These processes are strictly controlled by the US Air Force. If the DAGR is compromised, the US Air Force can cut off the device access to PPS signals and the anti-spoofing capability.

e. The same SAASM capabilities resident in the DAGR are also resident in the AN/TPQ-53(V) KN-4083 Inertial Navigation System (INS). The KN-4083 is a SAASM enhanced INS capability with a 3-axis Monolithic Ring Laser Gyro allowing extremely accurate location as well as 3-axis accelerometer to provide angular information regarding the radar position (i.e. pitch, roll, and azimuth data). While inertial navigation and accelerometer capabilities are well-known, the SAASM capability within the system makes it sensitive but UNCLASSIFIED. As with the DAGR, the US Air Force can cut off access to PPS signals and anti-spoofing capabilities, minimizing impacts should a potential adversary obtain the system.

2. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of the specific radar hardware and software elements, the information could be used to identify ways of countering the detection capabilities of the AN/TPQ-53(V) Radar System or improve the performance of their radar systems. Testing and identification of methods to defeat the AN/TPQ-53(V) ECCM capabilities would lead to improvements in the overall effectiveness of an adversary's system and improve their survivability.

3. A determination has been made that Saudi Arabia can provide substantially the same degree of protection for the technology being released as the U.S. Government. This sale is necessary in furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the Policy Justification.

4. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal have been authorized for release and export to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate adopted the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. This legislation facilitates the process of terminating nonperforming VA employees by eliminating certain due process protections that are currently part of the system. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs says he needs this authority to reform the system. The Senate, by voice vote, honored the request. However, in Alaska, we have a different problem which is not addressed in the legislation, and that problem is filling vacant positions within the VA. The major challenge facing VA leaders in Alaska is recruitment and retention.

The Wasilla community based outpatient clinic, CBOC, serves veterans in the fastest growing community in the State. The last permanent physician at this CBOC resigned in May 2014, citing "excessive workload." A number of temporary physicians have rotated

through since, and some have considered VA employment, but ultimately said no. The fact remains that, for the past 3 years, the VA has not been able to recruit a single physician to permanently staff this CBOC, a facility that, given demand, requires a permanent staff of two—or possibly three—physicians. Wasilla is hardly the most remote place in the State. Actually, it is one of the least remote. Moreover, it is one of the most desirable places in Alaska to live. For example, Mat-Su Regional Hospital, the community hospital down the road, has no problem retaining medical professionals. Staffed with 160 physicians in 28 specialties, including primary care, it was recently highlighted by Becker's Hospital Review as one of the 150 best places to work in healthcare for 2017. By comparison, the VA has been unable to recruit a single physician to permanently tend to the needs of our veterans in the Mat-Su Valley.

That suggests to me that the VA has a second problem. The VA is simply not regarded as an employer of choice among potential recruits. Removing due process protections for VA employees may well exacerbate that problem. Over the past 14 years, I have spent time with a great many VA employees, and the fear that a supervisor may now have greater latitude to target an individual on a trumped up charge because they are seen to be rocking the boat or because they just don't like them is a real one. We have very good management in the Alaska VA healthcare system now, but the faces of managers change with some frequency and with those changes can come wide swings in management philosophies.

At a recent hearing of the MILCON-VA subcommittee, my friend from Florida, Senator RUBIO, asked Dr. Shulkin, "In your time at the Veterans Administration, have you ever seen or do you have any evidence of any instance in which supervisors targeted individuals for dismissal because they just don't like them and were going to make something up in order to get rid of them?" While the official transcript is not yet available, we do have the CQ transcript. That transcript indicates that Dr. Shulkin did not directly answer the question. He responded that the VA has seen cases of documented whistleblower retaliation.

But not every employee who faces inequity in the workplace becomes a whistleblower. Some just go out and find a new job which offers better working conditions and in some cases better money than the VA pays.

To his credit, Dr. Shulkin went on to say, "But, I want people to understand, I am not seeking this and I do not support your legislation so that we can willy-nilly fire employees, or allow supervisors to abuse our employees. This allows due process. I believe it's very important that our employees have due process, the right to pre-decisional appeals, and the right to be represented by the union or their attorneys."

I hope that he is right about how this will work out on the ground, but the VA is a highly decentralized system with a great many seemingly autonomous decisionmakers. In asking for this new authority, Dr. Shulkin must accept the responsibility for ensuring that it is not abused and must also accept accountability in the event that it is, but the larger question is whether all of the energy we have put into legislating VA accountability does anything to make the VA a more attractive employer to in-demand healthcare professionals. I would like to see the VA devote as much energy and creativity to addressing this challenge as it has to the issue before us yesterday.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

GRANITE MOUNTAIN/SPECULATOR MINE FIRE

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today I wish to remember metal mining's greatest disaster, the Granite Mountain/Speculator Mine Fire that took place 100 years ago in Butte, MT, that claimed the lives of 168 men.

On the night of June 8, 1917, approximately 410 men were in the mine, working to meet the demand for copper that was created by our Armed Forces on the frontlines during World War I. An electric cable had been lowered into the mine earlier in the day and had gotten away from the workers, falling into a tangled coil. Later that evening, as crews examined the damaged cable, a lamp accidentally ignited the cable and sparked a fire that would fill the mine with smoke and poisonous gas.

Unable to lower cages due to fire damage, in an act of pure bravery, over 100 rescue workers immediately jumped into harm's way to try to rescue their trapped brothers. Miraculously, none of the rescue workers were killed, but sadly, after the conclusion of rescue efforts, a total of 168 miners were lost. The community of Butte grieved together, as did the entire Montana family.

Today I want to honor those who perished that tragic day and honor those whose families who would never be the same after it. Would you please join me in a brief moment of silence to remember those miners and their families?

This proclamation is meant to recognize the strength of those Montanans who sacrificed their lives in support of our Nation's military work in World War I, as well as those who jumped to help a fallen brother without question. The tragedy that befell our mining community highlights the strength found in the hearts of not only Montanans, but all Americans, and the moments that make heroes out of ordinary men and bring communities together.

So that future generations will not forget the men who perished that day, a memorial was built in honor of those who died in the Granite Mountain/

Speculator Mine Fire. If you are ever in our beautiful State, I hope you will take time to visit.

One hundred years after this tragedy, we are also reminded of how far we have come in hard rock mining. Jobs that were once seen as high risk are now very desirable, not just due to high wages, but more importantly because of advances in safety. In fact, according to the Department of Labor, fiscal year 2016 was the safest year in mining history. The continued progress toward safer mining has been a shared effort across State and Federal agencies, as well as the mining community itself. New technology, better practices, special initiatives, and improved training have led to a culture in mining communities and industry that prioritizes safety. The Granite Mountain/Speculator Mine Fire reminds us so that we must continue to push for even safer mining.

Lastly, I want to take a moment to thank those hard rock miners who are spread across our beautiful country and who continue to serve the American people. Thank you for all that you do. We must continue to prioritize safety that we never again have a tragedy like that of the Granite Mountain/Speculator Mine Fire.●

TRIBUTE TO HELEN AND BOBBY FELDMAN

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Helen and Bobby Feldman for their strong leadership in the Jewish community. Bobby and Helen have been involved in a number of causes that celebrate their Jewish heritage as well as make a difference by putting the needs and well-being of others before themselves.

Bobby and Helen have worked with many organizations, including Stand With Us, an organization dedicated to educating individuals all over the world about Israel and ways to combat anti-Semitism, and HonestReporting, a media watchdog organization dedicated to providing facts, figures, and statistics to journalists across the world to ensure Israel's story is told fairly by the media.

Bobby Feldman's interest in Jewish culture and causes stemmed from his early interest in environmental issues. He worked with the Jewish National Fund in Las Vegas where he now serves as the president of the southern Nevada chapter. Their organization is working to revitalize areas in Israel by planting trees, creating parks, and working to build a better country for years to come.

Helen Feldman has a list of accomplishments herself. She helped organize the Women's Alliance of the Jewish National Fund. This organization encourages future generations of Las Vegas women to celebrate our solidarity with Israel. She also volunteered her time at local nursing homes; there she shows off her amazing singing talents and brightens the day of so many Nevada seniors.

On Sunday, April 30, the Jewish National Fund is hosting their annual Love of Israel brunch where both Helen and Bobby will be recognized for their involvement in the community. These two individuals should be proud of all that they have done together.

Earlier this week, Israel celebrated their Holocaust Remembrance Day, honoring and remembering the 6 million Jewish people who were the victims of Nazi hatred. It serves us all as a reminder for the need to turn away prejudice and racism and embrace others. That is why I am both humbled and honored to acknowledge Helen and Bobby for their work here in the great State of Nevada. I also want to congratulate them on 29 years of marriage, and I look forward to seeing more from them as they continue to make us all very proud.●

TRIBUTE TO BETTY FOX

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Betty Fox and not only wish her a happy birthday, but also reflect on her years of service. Betty Fox served her country in the Armed Forces and remains an active leader in the community. On April 22, Betty Fox turned 98 years old, and to this day, she makes us proud to call her a fellow Nevadan and American.

Betty Fox joined the Marine Corps in April 1943 shortly after the beginning of World War II. She was stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station, MCAS, located in Cherry Point, NC. She was then sent to the MCAS in El Toro, CA, there she received the Honorable Service Lapel Button marking her outstanding service to her country. Betty Fox was promoted to private first class on August 20, 1943, then to corporal on January 24, 1944. She was discharged on February 5, 1944, but her promotions and designations reflect on her service and our country will never be able to fully repay her for the sacrifices she made in the defense of freedom.

In 1956, she moved to Las Vegas, NV, and has been a Nevadan ever since. Despite no longer being Active military personnel, Betty Fox remains involved in the local community. She epitomizes an age-old saying: "You are only as old as you feel."

Betty Fox volunteered at the Las Vegas convention center for the past 18 years. She is an active, lifetime member of the Marine Corps League, Local Detachment 186, and has marched in several Veteran's Day parades in order to honor those who, like her, sacrificed to defend America and its values.

Betty is also a lifetime member of Women Marine Association, WMA, and was an active member until the local chapter disbanded. After years of serving her country and community, she volunteered her time at the local senior living center, brightening the day of many of Nevada's senior citizens.

I am both humbled and honored to acknowledge Betty Fox for her service to our country and community. Her

sacrifices and continued commitment to helping those who served makes me proud to call her a fellow Nevadan. As Nevada's senior Senator, I want to honor her success, her life of giving back, and wish her the happiest 98th birthday. Rest assured, we all look forward to her continued efforts that are sure to inspire us all.●

RECOGNIZING THE WOMEN'S MINING COALITION

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the Women's Mining Coalition, a Nevada-born group that has devoted 25 years of service advocating for a strong U.S. mining industry. I am proud to honor the significant contributions the Women's Mining Coalition has made to the mining industry in the State of Nevada and throughout our Nation. I am extremely proud of their successes and am grateful for how it has benefited the Silver State.

In 1993, three Nevada geologists—Kathy Benedetto, Ruth Carraher, and Debbie Struhsacker—started the Women's Mining Coalition in response to the congressional debate to enact major changes to the U.S. mining law that would threaten the future of Nevada's mining industry and hard rock mining throughout the country. At that time, they never dreamed that their concept would involve more than taking a couple of trips to Washington, to talk to lawmakers about mineral exploration, the importance of mining, and that mining is a good career for women, but this Battle-Born Nevada concept has become a nationwide, quarter-century commitment to talk to Members of Congress about how modern mining provides the building blocks of our society while caring for the environment and providing family-wage jobs to miners and the many companies throughout the country that provide equipment, goods, and services to the mineral exploration and mining sectors.

Each year, WMC's Nevada members travel to the group's annual Washington, DC fly-in. These Nevada women represent the diverse domestic mining industry and discuss legislative issues and proposed rules affecting mining. During these meetings, WMC members put a face to mining that lawmakers don't expect: women involved in all facets of mining, from equipment operators and manufacturers, engineers, executives, miners, metallurgists, geologists, and environmental scientists.

Last September at a banquet in Las Vegas, the group received the prestigious Prazen Living Legends of Mining Award from the National Mining Hall of Fame for their many years of service and commitment to the mining industry. Not resting on their laurels, the Women's Mining Coalition is in Washington, DC, this week to continue their work to let Congress know that a strong mining industry is essential to the future of Nevada and our Nation.