

this question, the administration is conducting a review of ballistic missile threats and our missile defense posture—the first of its kind since 2010. There is no doubt that the threat environment of today is far more sophisticated and challenging than it was during the last review.

Our missile defense posture has remained largely unchanged since 2013. When responding to North Korean missile developments, then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced the Obama administration's decision to increase the number of deployed interceptors from 30 to 44. The final deployment of these interceptors is expected by the end of this year, which demonstrates another point that we must bear in mind when we consider our missile defenses: Decisions take years to implement.

The fact that we are ahead of the threat today is not good enough. We should be asking ourselves whether the steps we are taking today are adequate to defeat the threats we know are coming in the future. I expect the administration's review to confirm the growing threat and articulate a clear response. The review is expected to conclude in the fall, and I plan to hold hearings to examine whether it is a proposed way forward.

In closing, I would note that the phrase “no good options” is frequently repeated when it comes to confronting the threat that is posed by North Korea. This may be true, but the gravity of the situation demands action. Kim Jong Un has repeatedly threatened to attack U.S. cities with nuclear weapons. His capacity to carry this threat grows with every passing day. We must change our strategy to protect the American people. Strong secondary sanctions and enhanced missile defense should form the basis of that new approach.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRIBUTE TO MARK BRAUDIS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, every week, I have been coming to the floor to talk about the wonderful people in my State. A lot of people have visited Alaska. If you haven't and you are watching on TV, we really, really want to welcome you to come. It will be the trip of a lifetime; I guarantee it.

What we like to do when we talk about our Alaskan of the Week is talk about someone who has made a real impact, someone who doesn't get a lot of attention, someone who has made an impact on his community or country,

and let people know we are thinking about them, let people know we are proud of them. Before recess, I want to do that for a couple of Alaskans today, and I would like to start by talking about a gentleman who has gotten a little press lately in Alaska, but I want the country to hear about it. It is really a remarkable story—Mr. Mark Braudis.

Let me tell you a little bit about Mark. Mark came to my attention through a recent column by Charles Wohlforth in the Alaska Dispatch News.

Mark is originally from Pennsylvania. When he was just 17 years old, he joined the Navy, like a lot of Alaskans. We have more vets per capita than any State in the country. He was deployed in 1972.

Mark said:

When I was in high school, everyone had long hair and were anti-government. That's not the way I was. I was for God and country. If my brothers were over there in Vietnam, I wanted to stand with them.

So he went. When a lot of people were avoiding service, he went.

When Mark got out, he couldn't find a job, so he began to hitchhike across the country into Canada and other places, and he wound up in the magical place we call Alaska. Mark arrived in 1976. After leaving once and coming back, he got a job as a taxi driver—a good job. He met and fell in love with one of his passengers, a beautiful woman named Helen. They went on to have seven children—Stephen, David, Kelly, Jared, Michael, and Jenny. Helen was a great mother.

Then, unfortunately, as sometimes happens in families in certain circumstances, tragedy struck their family. In 2007, Helen was walking down a busy road and was hit and unfortunately killed by a car passing by.

Faced with unspeakable grief, Mark knew he couldn't fall apart. He had seven kids between the ages of 6 and 16, and he had to take care of them. One of them was in third grade at the time and couldn't stop crying over the loss of his mom. The school called often, and Mark—still a taxi driver—left work to pick him up. The hours of tending to his kids began to rack up. He couldn't pay the rent. His kids and he had to eventually live in a homeless shelter.

A social worker wanted to put the kids up for adoption, but Mark refused. They had lost their mother, they had lost their home, and they weren't going to lose their dad. The family needed him, and they were a team.

Eventually—and this is so great; it happens all across Alaska, all across America—with the help of the community, in this case, their local Catholic church, Saint Anthony's Parish, Mark was able to afford rent for a three-bedroom apartment with one bathroom where they still live today and to buy his own taxi license.

In the face of adversity, he raised his kids to be strong, proud, caring, re-

sponsible, and to do the right thing. They stuck together. They ran together, sometimes as many as 6 miles a day—the Navy veteran out with his children. They studied together. They were good kids. They didn't miss school or the bus. They never got in trouble. They were a team.

This is what is remarkable about this family: Six out of the seven Braudis children, whom I have been speaking about, have joined the Marines Corps. They have taken after their dad, serving their country—six out of seven. How many families in America can say that? The seventh couldn't because of a medical issue, and he is nearly finished with a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Alaska in Anchorage and tutors students in math at the university.

The youngest one, Jenny, a senior in high school, has already been sworn in to the Marines. She wants to drive tanks. The middle child, Jared, is the only one who joined the infantry. When they all get together, he kids them, telling them he is the tough one, but I am sure they are all tough. Jared said:

When we were growing up, my dad just made things right. He still does.

What did Mark learn from these challenges? He said:

When you're married, you become one. And when my wife passed away, she brought me to God with her. And then I brought my children to God. I didn't understand it then, but I do now. It's been one miracle after another.

Also, what I learned? I'm a dad above everything else.

Well, Mark, thank you. Thanks to you, your children, and your family for this amazing example and for doing such a great job of raising your kids. You are a model for all of us. Thank you for being our Alaskan of the Week.

TRIBUTE TO KATHY HEINDL

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, as I mentioned earlier, I come to the floor every week to talk about my great State and to talk about the people of my great State—the people who make it a better place for all of us. We call these people the Alaskan of the Week. It is one of the most fulfilling parts of my job to come here and talk about people who make a difference, people who don't get a lot of press, people who don't get a lot of attention, but people who are doing the right thing for their country and for their community.

Right now in Alaska, we have tourists, people coming from all over, and one of the things happening in Alaska is salmon season. The biggest runs in the world—the bounty of our great State—are happening right now, and the fish are running. If you or anyone listening has ever had the opportunity to catch or eat wild Alaskan salmon, of course, it is the memory of a lifetime. There is nothing better; there is no better fish in the world.

There is great salmon fishing all across Alaska, but one of the most heavily fished areas in Alaska and the

world is on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, about 45 minutes from Anchorage. Millions of salmon run up the rivers of the Kenai, drawing tens of thousands of Alaska sports, personal use, and commercial fishermen, as well as visitors from all over the country, all over the world to fish the amazing Kenai River.

The area can continue to support a lot of traffic, but when you have that many people on the Kenai, sometimes it does cause congestion. So let me talk about someone who works on these issues for Alaska—Kathy Heindl.

Kathy is an engineer with Homer Electric Association on the Kenai. Ten years ago, she visited Alaska as a tourist. She saw the Northern Lights dancing in the winter, the snow-covered mountains, and she knew she was home. She loves the Kenai. There is a sense of freedom there and all across Alaska. It is a place where there is room to pave your own path but support others and the community around you, and, of course, there are the salmon.

Since Kathy moved to Alaska, she has been working to give back to the community that she loves so much. She is an active member and past president of her local Rotary Club. She is a member of the Kenai Peninsula Borough Community Emergency Response Team. She is also a member of a group that operates ham radios in order to help if there is a disaster and shuts down cell service or other communication devices.

During the summer, right now, she spends much of her free time as a Kenai Peninsula Stream Watch volunteer with the Kenai Watershed Forum, helping to make sure that she will have a sustainable fishery—that we will have a sustainable fishery in the Kenai and throughout the State for generations to come. A few times a week, for as many as 6 hours at a time, she roams the fishing spots, picking up trash, helping others, speaking with anglers. She talks to them about how to protect themselves. She carries around safety goggles—you never want a hook in the eye. She talks about what happens when you run into a bear, which happens a lot in our great State, and the best way to avoid them, and importantly, she educates anglers on how to protect the vegetated banks on this great river to maintain the health of the river and the amazing salmon in it.

The vast majority of the people in Alaska and from out of State who fish the Kenai are responsible and want to help in any way they can, and they love Kathy's help, but, still, all the activity in the area has created erosion problems, which has the potential to hurt the fish.

The Kachemak Heritage Land Trust, a land stewardship and conservation trust based in Homer, recently recognized Kathy's efforts and presented her with the King Maker Award. "It is your selfless actions that help protect the vital habitat needed for salmon to

live and thrive," the land trust wrote to her. "Great role models such as yourself can inspire others in our communities to take action by following your lead" and your example.

Mr. President, I want to congratulate Kathy for all the work she is doing, especially in this busy summer in Alaska, and for being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The bill clerk read the nominations of Brooks D. Tucker, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Congressional and Legislative Affairs); Michael P. Allen, of Florida, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims for the term of fifteen years; Amanda L. Meredith, of Virginia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims for the term of fifteen years; Joseph L. Toth, of Wisconsin, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims for the term of fifteen years; Thomas G. Bowman, of Florida, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and James Byrne, of Virginia, to be General Counsel, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Tucker, Allen, Meredith, Toth, Bowman, and Byrne nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the next set of nominations to the Treasury Department are critical for tax reform.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 111, 113, 114, 184, and 244.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The bill clerk read the nominations of David Malpass, of New York, to be an Under Secretary of the Treasury; Brent James McIntosh, of Michigan, to be General Counsel for the Department of the Treasury; Andrew K. Maloney, of Virginia, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury; David J. Kautter, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury; and Christopher Campbell, of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Malpass, McIntosh, Maloney, Kautter, and Campbell nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 96, 240, 242, and 243.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The bill clerk read the nominations of Mira Radielovic Ricardel, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration; Richard Ashoo, of New Hampshire, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce; Neal J. Rackleff, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and Anna Maria Farias, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc