

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have been doing oversight of the executive branch for a very long time. I have done it as ranking member, I have done it as chairman, I have done it when my party held the White House, and I have done it when the other party held the White House.

Earlier this year, I stood up for the rights of my Democratic colleagues to do oversight of the Trump administration, even while they are in the minority. I did it because it was the right thing to do. Lots of people give lip service to the notion of bipartisan oversight, but very few actually practice it. It is tough. You have to be willing to work with colleagues in the other party to ask tough questions of your own political allies.

You can't just ask. If you actually want answers, you have to follow through. True bipartisan oversight is impossible unless it is a two-way street. If Democrats are unwilling to ask hard questions and force answers from their own political allies, then there is simply no way to move forward together in good faith. Both sides need to be committed to getting the whole story—not just the half they think helps their side. Regardless of whether my Democratic colleagues join me, I am interested in that whole story.

There are two major controversies plaguing the credibility of the Justice Department and the FBI right now. On the one hand, the Trump-Russia investigation, and then on the other hand, the handling of the Clinton investigation. Any congressional oversight related to either one of these topics is not credible without also examining the other.

Both cases were active during last year's campaign. Both cases have been linked to the firing of the FBI Director. I have been trying to explain this to my Democratic colleagues for months. The political reality is, half of the country thinks our law enforcement establishment gave Hillary Clinton and her aides a pass. These questions go to the heart of the integrity of our Federal law enforcement and justice system.

They are not going to go away just because Clinton lost the election. The independent inspector general at the Justice Department certainly isn't ignoring that issue. Democrats and Republicans in Congress have asked the inspector general to look into a host of issues involving the handling of the Clinton investigation during the campaign. His hard work has already uncovered some pretty disturbing information.

Over the past week, the press has reported that an FBI agent was removed from the special counsel's team and de-

moted at the FBI due to—what do you think—political bias. The agent was at the very center of both of these high-profile investigations. High-ranking FBI agent Peter Strzok reportedly used his work phone to send anti-Trump and pro-Clinton text messages to another FBI agent with whom he was having an illicit and immoral relationship.

This man was the Deputy Assistant Director for the FBI's Counterintelligence Division. He worked on the investigation of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's use of a private server to conduct—what do you think—official business.

According to news reports and according to documents, it looks like he also helped draft Comey's controversial public statement ending that case of Hillary Clinton and emails. Specifically, he apparently edited out language that suggested legal jeopardy for Clinton. Press reports state he opened the FBI's investigation of allegations of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia. It has been reported that he was one of the two FBI agents who interviewed former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn.

Can you imagine if the shoe were on the other foot? What if a high-ranking FBI official got caught expressing pro-Trump political bias on his work phone while leading what is supposed to be a professional, objective, and non-partisan search for the truth? Why, of course, if that were happening, Democrats would go ballistic, and they would have every right to go ballistic.

This man held a crucial position of public trust, charged with protecting this country from counterintelligence threats. He was a key part of Director Comey's Clinton investigation and his Russia investigation. I have been saying for months that these two cases are forever linked. You cannot separate them.

The same people in the same agency handled both cases at the same time, and now a huge segment of the American people have no faith that these cases were treated, as they should be, impartially. I don't blame the American people.

It is interesting that before he was fired, FBI Director Comey lectured our Judiciary Committee and lectured the public about how the men and women of the FBI "don't give a rip about politics."

I believe that for most of the hard-working, rank-and-file FBI agents, that is absolutely true. Their jobs normally don't involve controversial political questions, and their own political views aren't relevant because they are professionals.

But no human is perfect, and no organization is immune from error. It does no good for the leaders of the FBI to pretend that its senior management is above all reproach, that they would never show any improper political bias, and that they would never make mistakes.

The only way to protect against bias or misconduct is to recognize that it

exists and to confront it, not to hide it from Congress and the American people.

The law and the facts, whatever they are, should guide the work of the FBI and the Justice Department. If politics infected the Department's decisions during a hotly contested national political campaign, we would have to look at it. That is true whether it occurred in the Clinton case, or in the Trump-Russia case, or if it included both.

Anyone claiming to do bipartisan oversight of the executive branch has to examine both. Ignoring either half of this story simply will not be credible with the other half of the country.

Everyone thought Hillary Clinton was going to be President—everyone. The perception of a huge segment of the public is that the whole Washington establishment worked overtime to get her name cleared before the Democratic Convention last summer. The FBI even called its case "Mid Year Exam."

Director Comey testified that the former Attorney General refused even to name the FBI's work and investigation. That is how political it became. It was really the Attorney General who was at that time insisting on calling it not an investigation but "a matter"—m-a-t-t-e-r—whatever that means.

We have learned that Director Comey started drafting his exoneration statement long before the investigation was done. It looks like there was a rush to clear her. It looks like the fix was in. I know Democrats don't want to hear that. They only want to talk about Trump.

There is a double standard here in the way they desperately want to go after the President but ignore all other potential wrongdoing in the previous administration. It stinks to high heaven.

But Democrats have visions of impeachment dancing in their heads. Rather than reserve judgment and carefully examine the facts—all of the facts—they are jumping to all sorts of conclusions.

The Judiciary Committee has an obligation to do a deep dive into the firing of James Comey and both of the two controversial political investigations that preceded it. Unfortunately, the Democrats are preventing any truly bipartisan path forward. They appear to be assuming the conclusion at the outset.

They complain publicly, and they complain privately that I am not doing enough to investigate "obstruction of justice," but "obstruction of justice" is a legal term of art. It is a conclusion, not evidence. That is not how I conduct my investigations.

I do not make my conclusions first and try to shoehorn the facts to fit my conclusions. I try to get the facts and then go where those facts lead.

Let's consider examples of where investigations have uncovered facts that point to "obstruction."

Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon both lied to investigators. That is obstruction, and that behavior got one of them impeached and forced the other to resign.

We also recently learned that Hillary Clinton's lawyers used a program called BleachBit to delete 33,000 emails under subpoena by the House of Representatives.

Now, those government records—and they are government records—can never be recovered. Those facts certainly look like obstruction, but we don't have all of the facts here yet.

So far, I have seen no credible evidence that President Trump has told anyone to lie. I also have seen no credible evidence that he or his aides have destroyed records being sought by investigators.

Many people firmly believe that the President fired the FBI Director in order to improperly halt an investigation of Lieutenant General Flynn.

Now, I am not only willing but I am eager to delve deeply into all of the circumstances surrounding Director Comey's removal, but to claim at the outset that his removal was obstruction of justice puts the cart before the horse.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article by the well-known liberal law professor Alan Dershowitz.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From The Boston Globe, Dec. 5, 2017]

SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN MAY BE
PROVOKING A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFLICT
(By Alan M. Dershowitz)

Senator Dianne Feinstein may be provoking a constitutional conflict between the legislative and executive branches of our government. The California Democrat has said that Congress is investigating whether President Trump engaged in obstruction of justice by firing FBI Director James Comey and taking other actions to halt the Russian investigation.

Feinstein said: "I think what we're beginning to see is the putting together of a case of obstruction of justice. I think we see this in the indictments—the four indictments and pleas that have just taken place.

"And I see it, most importantly, in what happened with the firing of Director Comey, and it is my belief that that is directly because he did not agree to lift the cloud of the Russia investigation, that's obstruction of justice."

No, it isn't.

Feinstein does not seem to understand that under our constitutional system of separation of powers, the president cannot be charged with a crime for merely exercising his authority under Article 2 of the Constitution. This authority includes firing the director of the FBI, for whatever reason or no reason. It also includes the authority to tell prosecutors who to prosecute and who not to. A president's motives may not be the basis for a criminal charge. Nor is it proper to psychoanalyze the president in a search for possible evil motives. All presidents act out of mixed motives, including self-aggrandizement, political advantage, partisan benefit, and personal pique.

Consider, for example, President Barack Obama's benighted decision, as a lame duck,

to tie the hands of his successor by unilaterally changing the longstanding American policy with regard to the United Nations condemnation of Israel. The president, over the objection of many members of Congress and most Americans, instructed his UN ambassador not to veto a Security Council Resolution that declared the Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem, and the access roads to Hebrew University and Hadassah Medical Center hospital, to be illegally occupied territory. Why did Obama exercise his authority in so pernicious a manner? I believe, and many Americans believe, that he did it out of spite and pique: to get even with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. If I am right, and I am sure that this was at least one of his motivating considerations, could he be charged with a crime for abusing his authority for personal vengeance? Of course not. We can condemn him, as I and others have. But we must all acknowledge that he had the authority to do what he did, regardless of his bad motives.

Ironically, it was the effort of the Trump administration to prevent the lame-duck president from tying the hands of the president-elect, by not vetoing the UN resolution, that formed the basis for the lying charge levied against General Michael Flynn. For whatever reason, Flynn lied—but what he lied about was entirely lawful.

Trump would have been within his constitutional authority to pardon Flynn, as Flynn hoped he would do. That would have kept him from cooperating with the special counsel and becoming a government witness. Had the president done that, he would have acted entirely lawfully, as President George H.W. Bush did when he pardoned Caspar Weinberger in order to stop the Iran-Contra investigation. Although special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh complained bitterly that the Bush presidential pardon had the intent and effect of completely closing down his investigation, no one suggested that Bush had committed the crime of obstruction of justice. Why? Because that was Bush and this is Trump—a pure ad hominem distinction that should be given no weight by the law.

It would do violence to our constitutional separation of powers if a president could be charged with a crime simply for exercising his constitutional authority. Checks and balances do not include the power to criminalize—through the vague obstruction of justice statute—presidential actions authorized by Article 2. Both Presidents Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton were accused of obstruction of justice, but in both cases they were accused of going well beyond the mere exercise of their constitutional authority. Nixon was accused of telling subordinates to lie to the FBI, paying hush money to potential witnesses, and destroying evidence. Clinton was accused of trying to get witnesses, such as Monica Lewinsky, to lie. These charges constitute acts—independent crimes—that go well beyond a presidential authority. Trump has not been accused of any acts that would independently constitute crimes. The entire case against him, as outlined by Feinstein, consists of constitutionally authorized acts that were well within the president's authority under Article 2. That is an enormous and consequential difference under our system of separation of powers.

So, until and unless there is proof that Trump has committed an independent criminal act—beyond acts that are within his constitutional prerogative—it would be unconstitutional to charge him with obstruction of justice, regardless of what Feinstein and others believe his motive may have been.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Now, Professor Dershowitz is not a fan of Donald

Trump, and he and I probably would not agree on many issues, generally speaking.

The title of his article is "Senator Dianne Feinstein may be provoking a constitutional conflict." Professor Dershowitz strongly disagrees with the ranking member's statement on "Meet the Press" the weekend that Comey was fired: "... directly because he did not agree to lift the cloud of the Russia investigation, that's obstruction of justice."

This is how Professor Dershowitz replied:

No, it isn't. ... under our constitutional system of separation of powers, the president cannot be charged with a crime for merely exercising his authority under Article 2 of the Constitution. This authority includes firing the director of the FBI, for whatever reason or no reason.

That is not to say that the President can engage in illegal conduct. But the professor's point, as I understand it, is that when a President takes an action that is within the scope of clear constitutional authority and discretion, it should be a political question not a criminal one.

The Judiciary Committee still needs to investigate the circumstances surrounding Comey's firing and the Flynn investigation. Those facts may have nothing to do with the obstruction but could still provide important insight about the potential reforms of how the FBI and the Justice Department operate.

For example, he explains how President Trump could have halted any investigation of Flynn if he really wanted to. This is what the professor says:

Trump would have been within his constitutional authority to pardon Flynn, as Flynn hoped he would do. That would have kept him from cooperating with the special counsel and becoming a government witness. Had the president done that, he would have acted entirely lawfully, as President George H.W. Bush did when he pardoned Caspar Weinberger in order to stop the Iran-Contra investigation. Although special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh complained bitterly that the Bush presidential pardon had the intent and effect of completely closing down his investigation, no one suggested that Bush had committed the crime of obstruction of justice.

Then, finally, Professor Dershowitz explains what real obstruction looks like and how it is different from a President's merely exercising his constitutional authority. So I, once again, quote the professor:

Both Presidents Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton were accused of obstruction of justice, but in both cases they were accused of going well beyond the mere exercise of their constitutional authority. Nixon was accused of telling subordinates to lie to the FBI, paying hush money to potential witnesses, and destroying evidence. Clinton was accused of trying to get witnesses, such as Monica Lewinsky, to lie. These charges constituted acts—independent crimes—that go well beyond presidential authority. Trump has not been accused of any facts that would independently constitute crimes. The entire case against him, as outlined by Feinstein, consists of constitutionally authorized acts that

were well within the president's authority under Article 2. That is an enormous and consequential difference under our system of separation of powers.

But our constitutional system of checks and balances is too important to throw it aside when it isn't politically convenient. You don't have to be a Trump fan to worry about the consequences of taking shortcuts in going after your political opponents. That is why bipartisan investigations are so very valuable.

When it works, a bipartisan inquiry can provide comfort that all angles have been explored and explored thoroughly.

But it takes two to tango, as they say.

Earlier this year, Ranking Member FEINSTEIN expressed concerns about reports that former Attorney General Lynch asked Director Comey to downplay the FBI's investigation as merely, a "matter" instead of using the term "investigation" during the campaign. Yet, since then, the ranking member has told me plainly that she will not join in any oversight of the FBI's Clinton email investigation.

Even on Trump-Russia oversight, where we have been able to cooperate a great deal, there have been similar problems.

First, all year, I have wanted to learn more about the origins of the dossier that largely kick-started the FBI's investigation of the Trump campaign.

In July, the ranking member joined me in a bipartisan letter seeking voluntary cooperation from the firm that produced the dossier. The dossier was based largely on Russian sources within Russia and was put together by a former British spy. It made salacious and unverified claims about Trump. The company responsible for producing it—Fusion GPS—was uncooperative.

In response to our bipartisan request, it dumped on the committee about 32,000 pages of press clippings and 8,000 pages that were entirely blank. Since then, it has provided zero additional documents.

The founder of Fusion GPS initially indicated that he would rely on his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination rather than testify at the committee hearing in July. He later agreed to a private staff interview but refused to answer dozens of key questions.

I would like to compel him to answer questions and compel him to provide the documents that Senator FEINSTEIN and I both asked him in July to provide voluntarily, but under our committee rules, I don't have the authority to do that on my own.

Why would Democrats not want to follow up and get the documents from Fusion GPS that we already asked for together—in other words, in a bipartisan way? Do they not want to know more about how this company put together its anti-Trump dossier from Russian Government sources?

Well, in light of recent news, the resistance from Democrats to this line of

Trump/Russia inquiry is now a little more understandable. It turns out that the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee are the ones that paid Fusion GPS for the information they gathered from Russian Government sources.

I don't know whether the ranking member or her staff knew the facts earlier this year when I was trying to persuade her to do bipartisan followup work with Fusion GPS, but I do know that unless both sides are willing to ask tough questions no matter where the facts lead, there can be no bipartisan oversight.

We have learned that the Democratic National Committee paid for an anti-Trump dossier based on information from Russian Government sources. Second, we have learned that the inspector general uncovered evidence of partisan bias by a senior FBI official at the center of both the Clinton and the Trump-Russia investigations, which led to his dismissal from the Mueller team.

Before that news broke, back in October of this year, I wrote to the FBI official requesting voluntary cooperation and a private transcribed interview with the committee. The ranking member did not sign that letter. The committee has received no letter in reply. We are still waiting for documents from the FBI about his and other officials' participation in the draft Comey statement.

The FBI should comply voluntarily, but if they don't, I would issue a subpoena to require that the documents be provided and that the witness sit for a deposition. However, under our committee rules, I don't have the authority to do that without support from the ranking member.

Finally, I have long had concerns that the scope of the FBI Clinton investigation was artificially narrow. Recent revelations about these text messages showing political bias only heighten these concerns.

In recent Federal court rulings, the FBI said that the scope of the investigation was limited in two ways. First, it was limited to two issues dealing with the handling of classified information. Second, the scope of the FBI review was limited to the time when former Secretary Clinton was at the State Department. But what if there was evidence of crime not related to the mishandling of classified information? What if the facts showed some obstruction such as intentional destruction of documents after she was Secretary of State? Why exclude those topics from the scope of the inquiry? Who made those decisions? Why were those decisions made? Was there any political bias in those decisions? Certain areas should not be declared off limits beforehand in an investigation. An investigation should go—common sense—where the facts take it.

In multiple letters to the FBI last year, I raised concerns about the scope of the FBI investigation. I asked Direc-

tor Comey back in May of 2016 whether the Justice Department had improperly narrowed the scope of the investigation to look at the mishandling of classified information and ignore other important legal issues. I wish to quote from that letter:

If federal records on the private server were hidden or destroyed, then there may have been a violation of 18 USC Section 2071, which prohibits concealing or destroying such Federal records.

If any of the deleted emails were responsive to Congressional inquiries or to agency inquiries, such as ones from the State Department Inspector General, then there may have been violations of 18 USC Sections 1505 and 1519, respectively.

Later in my letter, I specifically asked whether the Justice Department limited the FBI's investigation in any way.

Then-Director Comey eventually responded months later. He claimed that the FBI did investigate whether the unlawful obstruction of Federal records occurred. But an FBI agent said under penalty of perjury that the FBI investigation did not include destruction of Federal records. So which is it? Who is telling the truth? The FBI agent who signed the affidavit, or is Mr. Comey right? Did the FBI really examine whether Secretary Clinton and her associates used the server to avoid Federal records retention requirements, or did Mr. Comey simply pay lip service to that concern and focus only on classification issues?

Understanding what really happened is incredibly important, and let me tell my colleagues why. During the course of the FBI's investigation, it recovered thousands of work-related emails that were not turned over to the State Department by Secretary Clinton. The FBI also recovered work-related emails that Secretary Clinton and her associates apparently deleted. All of this is clear evidence of alienation of Federal records. Indeed, even the FBI's now-public investigative files show that the FBI had knowledge that Federal records were deleted.

The FBI's interview summary of Secretary Clinton said that she was asked about "a PRN work ticket, which referenced a conference call among PRN, Kendall, and Mills on March 31, 2015." I am going to repeat that. She was asked about "a PRN work ticket, which referenced a conference call among PRN, Kendall, and Mills on March 31, 2015." PRN stands for Platte River Networks, the company that administered Secretary Clinton's nongovernment server. Kendall is David Kendall, her lawyer. Mills is Cheryl Mills, her former Chief of Staff at the State Department.

Paul Combetta, the administrator of her server, was also on the conference call and was interviewed multiple times by the FBI. He admitted that he lied to the FBI in his initial interviews and got immunity from the FBI in exchange for agreeing to tell them the truth. According to the summary of that interview, Mr. Combetta deleted Secretary Clinton's email archives on March 31, 2015.

So we have a conference call with Secretary Clinton's attorneys on March 31, 2015, and on that very same day, her emails are deleted by someone who was on that conference call, using special BleachBit software. The emails were State Department records under subpoena by Congress.

What did the FBI do to investigate this apparent obstruction? According to affidavits filed in Federal court, absolutely nothing. The FBI focused only on the handling of classified information. Maybe now we know why.

Recently released FBI records show that by May 2, 2016, Mr. Comey sent around a draft of his statement exonerating Secretary Clinton. The FBI interview with Mr. Combetta hadn't even happened yet. The exoneration statement was already in progress before the key witness had coughed up the truth about deleting Federal records under subpoena by Congress.

Did the FBI look at obstruction in the Clinton case? Mr. Comey said the FBI looked very hard at obstruction, but that is hard to believe. Director Comey began drafting an exoneration statement in April or early May of 2016. That is months before he publicly announced that he would not recommend charges on July 5, 2016.

According to the testimony of senior FBI officials, Comey began drafting his statement early because the FBI knew where the investigation was headed. That is according to testimony of senior FBI officials. But at that point, the FBI had not yet interviewed 17 witnesses. That ought to be understood. They hadn't yet interviewed 17 witnesses. And one of those witnesses—can you believe it—was Secretary Clinton. Others included her closest aides and associates. How can you possibly know where an investigation is headed without interviewing the main witnesses and the subject of the investigation?

Maybe none of this raises any concerns for Democrats, but it should. The American people deserve to have the whole story. Congress and the public have a right to understand whether the fix was in from the very beginning. If so, then it must take steps to make sure it never happens again.

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. GRASSLEY. 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 WALLACE "WALLY" MATTISON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermonters have a legacy of service unmatched in the Nation. While new generations carry on this tradition, we continue to owe so much to the bravery of those men and women who

served in the past. One of the members of this distinguished community is Wallace "Wally" Mattison, a native of Bennington, VT. Mr. Mattison served in the famed 29th Infantry Division, 115th Regiment as a light machine gunner. He fought on the frontlines in Normandy and throughout Europe from 1943 to 1945, during which time he was wounded. His commitment unwavering, he returned to service after his recovery.

Our State and Nation have praised Mr. Mattison's essential contributions, but the recognition of his service extends beyond our shores. Earlier this month, France, a country Mr. Mattison helped liberate from Nazi control, awarded him with their highest civil and military distinction: the Legion of Honor. With the receipt of this award, he joins an exclusive group that includes Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, and select others who have served and sacrificed on behalf of the citizens of France.

It is impossible to fully express the gratitude I feel for Mr. Mattison's service. Vermonters, Americans, and citizens of the world owe him a debt that cannot be repaid with words or awards. We can, however, share these stories of bravery and sacrifice. That is why today I would like to pay tribute to Wallace "Wally" Mattison, and I ask unanimous consent that a Bennington Banner article highlighting his past service and recent receipt of the Legion of Honor, entitled, "To us, you are a true hero," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Bennington Banner, Nov. 23, 2017.

TO US, YOU ARE A TRUE HERO

(By Derek Carson)

For his service in France in World War II, Wallace "Wally" Mattison has been presented with France's highest civil and military distinction.

Mattison, a resident of Pownal and native of Bennington, was honored on Wednesday by Valery Freland, the Consul General of France in Boston. The ceremony took place at the Vermont Veterans Home. Mattison was incorporated into the 29th infantry division, 115th regiment in 1943, and served as a light machine gunner on the front lines of the Normandy invasion before participating in the Battles of Saint Lo and the Battle for Brest, during the latter of which he was shot while advancing on a German garrison. The bullet barely missed his spine. Upon his recovery in 1945, he continued to serve, participating in the capture of several German cities. He later served as a captain and acting chief of the Bennington Police Department.

Col. Al Faxon, chief operating officer of the Veterans Home, said that there had not been a Legion of Honor ceremony at the home during his tenure there, and he knew of no other recipients from Bennington. Freland said that Mattison was one of fewer than 10 Legion of Honor recipients this year in his district, which covers all of New England.

The French Legion of Honor was established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802. Mattison was honored as a chevalier, or knight, of the order. American recipients of the honor include many who have served

France or the ideals it upholds, including Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point as an institution. Today, there are about 93,000 members of the order around the world.

"It's such an honor to have this ceremony in our home," said Faxon. "Without our French allies, we probably would not have won the American Revolution . . . The French aided the colonists by providing military personnel, armaments, and loans. King Louis XVI approved financial assistance to the American colonists only four days after Benjamin Franklin and his comrades requested it. Could you imagine getting a bank loan in four days today?"

"If you see the king, tell him we said thank you," joked Faxon to Freland.

During the ceremony, Mattison was surrounded by several generations of his family. At first, he was determined to keep a straight face throughout, but after hearing words of praise from Faxon, State Rep. Mary Morrissey, U.S. Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders, U.S. Rep. Peter Welch, and Gov. Phil Scott, he finally broke down and began to cry. "You people," he said, "are too good to me." When Faxon offered him the opportunity to say a few more words, Mattison declined.

"The Mattison family has a long and proud history of dedicated service," said Morrissey. "It was just several months ago that we were honoring Wally's brother Erwin for his 60 years of service with the Bennington Fire Department. Today we honor Wally, a purple heart recipient, for his brave and honorable World War II military service in France."

"Wally's service-above-self model is well-documented, both by his military service to our country and then for his 40 years of service for our community, county, and state, as a police officer who rose through the ranks to become a captain and acting police chief," she said.

Morrissey also read the letters from Governor and U.S. Congressional delegation, who she said all expressed their heartfelt regret that they were unable to attend. Leahy asked that a flag be flown over the U.S. Capitol in Mattison's honor: That flag was presented to Mattison, after being folded in the ceremonial fashion by Faxon and Lieutenant Junior Grade Daniel Tift.

Mattison will be honored by the Vermont State Legislature when it returns in January.

Finally, the time came for Freland to present Mattison with the award. Flanked by the U.S. and French flags, the consul general quoted French President Emmanuel Macron's words earlier this year, when he said, "It is a privilege to be speaking here before you today and I know who I owe that to. I owe it to all those who, a little over 70 years ago, rose up against a barbaric regime which seized my country, France. I owe it to the nations who heard the cry of these resistance fighters and who sent their children, from America, Africa, Oceania and Asia, to French shores to help."

"They did not all know what France was, but they knew that defeat for France also meant the defeat of the ideals that they shared, that they were proud of and for which they were willing to die. They knew that their freedom and their values depended on the freedom of other men and women living thousands of kilometers from them."

After Freland had finished reciting the lengthy list of honors and awards Mattison had received throughout his military career, Mattison added, "I got a good conduct medal, too!"

"We remember the ultimate sacrifice made by so many of your comrades, who are now laid to rest in France," said Freland to Mattison. "I know you are very modest, but to us, you are a true hero."