

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 624.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, John Kennedy, Richard Burr, Mike Lee, David Perdue, Steve Daines, James Lankford, Pat Roberts, Johnny Isakson, Jeff Flake, Lindsey Graham, Patrick J. Toomey, Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, James E. Risch.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

WELCOMING MAILE PEARL BOWLSBEY TO THE SENATE FLOOR

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, it was very exciting to have Maile Pearl with us on the floor just moments ago. It was certainly the first time I have seen a little baby on the floor of the Senate and may be a good symbol for the work the Senate will be doing in the future for the children of the United States of America.

Congratulations to Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH and her husband, Bryan Bowlsbey, for this miraculous addition to American citizenry. We are looking forward to seeing little Maile as she grows and prospers in all of the chapters of her life ahead.

ROHINGYA HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Mr. President, while accepting his Nobel Peace Prize, the great humani-

tarian and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said: "Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe."

As we look around the world today, there are far too many places where men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, but a place that really stands out is the nation of Burma.

The Rohingya people have endured unimaginable pain and suffering. Since August of last year, with assaults by the military and nearby groups in Burma, 350 villages have been burned; women and girls of all ages have been raped; and over 700,000 Rohingya have fled their nation for neighboring Bangladesh to escape this horrific assault. In just the first month of this crisis, Doctors Without Borders said well over 6,000 Rohingya were killed, including hundreds of children under the age of 5. One U.N. adviser on genocide prevention said: "The Rohingya have endured what no human beings should ever have to endure."

Now we are seeing the brutality of the Burmese military, followed by a deliberate strategy of isolation and starvation.

Several times in recent years, Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times has traveled to Burma to report on the Rohingya. Earlier this year, he entered the country on a tourist visa. He was warned by the Burmese Government not to do any reporting, but he did. He traveled to a total of five Rohingya villages and worked hard to be able to see these places to which everyone was banned from going.

Back in November, a group of five Members of Congress went to visit these same villages—two Senators and three House Members. We were told by the Government of Burma that we would be allowed to visit the villages, but at the very last moment, the government rescinded its invitation. Two months earlier, in September of last year, the leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, had said to the United Nations that Burma had nothing to hide and that the international community was welcome to come and see for themselves. So five Members of Congress went to see for themselves and for their constituents and to be able to report back to the entire Nation, but we were not allowed to see these camps, these villages, that had been burned.

Nicholas Kristof did succeed in going. Here is what he wrote:

What I found was a slow-motion genocide. The massacres and machete attacks of last August are over for now, but Rohingya remain confined in their villages—and to a huge concentration camp—and are systematically denied most education and medical care. So they die. No one counts the deaths accurately, but my sense is that the Myanmar Government kills more Rohingya by denying them health care and sometimes food than by wielding machetes or firing bullets.

Matthew Smith, from the human rights group Fortify Rights, said:

"These tactics are right out of the genocidaires' playbook . . . underfeeding and systematically weakening a population has been characteristic of other genocides."

We in the congressional delegation were not allowed to go to those villages to see for ourselves. We were allowed to go to Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, where the Rohingya live. In the capital, we were told we could visit Aung Mingalar. It is also called the Muslim Quarter. When I took this picture, I was standing in the Muslim Quarter, looking down the street. What you see is a police station at the end of the street and a barrier. This neighborhood is cut off from the rest of the capital.

If you think of the early stage of the Warsaw Ghetto, when people were not allowed to leave the neighborhood, that is what is happening right at this moment in the capital of Rakhine State in Sittwe. It is illegal for them to leave. In fact, the folks who live there have stores that have been locked up and shut for years because they are not allowed to leave this neighborhood and open their stores. There is a hospital right around the corner, and they are not allowed to go to it. Instead, they have to get safe passage to an internally displaced person's camp outside of Sittwe, get a referral slip, and come back to Sittwe to go to the hospital. There are incredibly difficult logistical challenges placed between this neighborhood and the hospital that is right next door.

This happens to be in the capital, where folks can stand along these fences and make trades for food, and they can receive on their smartphones international support. Yet imagine if you took this neighborhood and lifted it out of the city and placed it out in the countryside where there is no supporting community around the outside—maybe no cell service, so you can't receive money on your cell phone. There are 120,000 people who are living in these camps, IDP camps, in Rakhine State—120,000.

Then think of those folks who fled those 350 villages that were burned—who fled and saw their family members shot, their family members raped, their family members burned inside of the huts that were torched in those villages.

Nicholas Kristof writes: "The folks who remain are being subjected to slow-motion genocide through starvation and deprivation of medical resources."

This is beyond acceptable. That condition is a form of ethnic cleansing, a form of genocide, and the United States should be absolutely vigilant in leading the world to respond.

Those folks who fled to safety in Bangladesh are also continuing to experience extreme hardship. This is a picture from the hillside, which is where we were. There are still a few trees standing, but the trees have been coming down to provide firewood and

to provide various, little supports to keep the houses upright. Mostly, these little houses—these little shelters—are being built on split bamboo that is split into very tiny pieces, tied up into a frame, and then plastic is draped over it. It is hard to imagine what this camp is going to look like when the monsoons hit. The monsoons were supposed to hit a few weeks ago. They have not yet, but they could hit any day now, and these camps are going to become a devastated mess when that occurs.

There are now 900,000 Rohingya—700,000 from this last horrific year—and several hundred thousand from previous episodes in which they were attacked by the military. Terrible sanitation makes these camps a breeding ground for cholera, diphtheria, and measles. There is a lot of concern that when the flooding comes with the monsoons, that will be when the sanitation systems will overflow and contaminate the water, and the cholera epidemic will follow.

Save the Children and other organizations have said: “The Rohingya refugee crisis is a children’s emergency.”

Camps are full of young men and women. This little boy here had built a little, tiny kite and was flying it around—just a scrap of plastic and two little scraps of wood. When I first saw it fluttering in the air, I asked: What is that? He brought it down and showed us here. You can see the shadow on the ground. They are children who are just trying to be children, making a little toy.

This young man and the other children are the lucky ones who got out alive. The survivors tell us about infants being ripped from their mothers’ arms, thrown alive into the burning fires, toddlers murdered in front of their families, countless teenage girls and even younger raped. Infants and young children in both the IDP camps and the refugee camps are still dying of disease and malnutrition. Those who are surviving now have to grow up in camps like this. Where will they go? How will they thrive? They have to figure out right now just how to survive day-to-day.

When I was in Bangladesh and at this camp, there was an international group who had set up a tent and was enabling the kids to come and play games, to draw pictures, to sing songs. This young man here—by the way, here is Congressman CICILLINE from the House side—was showing me the drawing that he had made that shows helicopters shooting at the villages. This is a piece of what these children had experienced. Many of them have drawings of helicopters and trucks that are shooting at the villagers as their families flee. I hope that the children have many joys like making and flying kites, but they are carrying scars we cannot even begin to imagine.

Now these children—homeless, without a school or access to minimal healthcare—have to figure out how to go forward. In one of Nicholas Kristof’s

articles, he writes that he spoke to a 12-year-old child in a camp and asked him what he hoped to do when he grew up. That is a question we often ask children. What do you hope to be? What do you hope to do? The child responded: “I don’t have any dreams.” That is a fairly heartbreaking response—young age, dreams crushed, just the challenge of surviving day-to-day. Every child in the world deserves to be able to dream.

The Rohingya in Bangladesh today are facing an impossible challenge. They are in a refugee camp that is full of hundreds of thousands of people and that has inadequate infrastructure. They would like to be able to reclaim their villages and return home. Quite frankly, Bangladesh, which is hosting them, would like them to be able to reclaim their villages and return home, but they can’t do so without enormous effort on the behalf of the very government that sent its military to annihilate them. They need international protection. They need a change of heart of the leaders of Burma.

Aung San Suu Kyi is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate because she stood up for the democratic process and suffered years of home detention as she pushed to have democracy restored. We in the world have expected her to stand up for this community and say it is unacceptable for these Rohingya families to be persecuted, this community to be persecuted in this fashion, but she has not stood up. I know many Members here have encouraged her to reverse course and stand up and not be part of this ethnic cleansing and part of this genocide. Only with her change of heart, only with her championship, only with her determination to have Burma respected on the international stage and to have human rights respected in that nation will the return be able to happen.

Right now there is no expectation that this can occur. However, there was an interesting story this past week. Earlier this week, a Facebook post on the official page of Burma’s Information Committee showed a family being repatriated back—a family of five being repatriated. They were being checked out medically. They received packages of rice, mosquito nets, and blankets, according to this post. But do you know what? No one really believes this story. There is no international agency involved in protecting this family. Were they even refugees to begin with? We don’t know.

What we do know is that the story itself said they are not going to be able to return to their village. They are going to be sent to an IDP camp—an internally displaced persons camp. There are already 120,000 people in camps just like this. Those are prison camps. While this is meant as a public gesture to the world that Burma is going to protect this family, Burma is sending them to a prison camp. Let no one in the international community be fooled.

The publicity campaign also showed them receiving national verification cards, but not citizenship cards. They are not being welcomed back as citizens. They are still being stripped of their citizenship. Even in their best effort to pretend that they are doing something positive, this family is being denied citizenship and being sent to a prison camp.

The international world must respond. How are we to do so?

Let us all encourage the President of the United States—our President of the United States—to speak about this horrific international case of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Since August, we have not had one word from the leader of our country about this horrific crime. We need to hear from our President. The world needs to hear from our President.

Second, we need to pass the repatriation resolution that has passed the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously, calling for the safe and dignified, voluntary and sustainable return of the Rohingya people. It demands that the United Nations must be part of any formal agreement. It has the unanimous support of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Let’s put it on the floor and have the unanimous support of the Senate as well.

Third, let’s have on the floor and pass the sanctions bill called the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act. This, too, has passed committee. This targets the military, which perpetuated this genocide. It doesn’t allow those military leaders to travel to the United States. It doesn’t allow military weapons sales to Burma. It cuts off military cooperation, except for humanitarian cooperation and training, to target the military that perpetuated this crime and to send a signal that this is unacceptable. Who else in the world—what dictator in the world—is looking at what has occurred in Burma and saying: We, too, can drive out a minority community we have gotten tired of.

The United States must respond in force. We need to invest in the education of children who are in those refugee camps. They are there with no schools. If it takes several years for them to find a permanent home, if ever, we can’t afford to then go years without education, without schools. Let the international community invest in their education and let the United States lead in that effort.

Let’s give strong international support to Bangladesh. Bangladesh didn’t have to open their borders to this flow of 700,000 refugees from across the river in Burma, but they did. In a humanitarian way, they did. They said: We will not let you be shot down on the banks across on the other side. Come and find refuge.

But now, the Government of Bangladesh needs international support. They are a poor country—poor in a way we can’t even imagine. That nation is half the size of Oregon. When it floods,

it is a quarter of the size of Oregon. In my home State of Oregon, we have 4 million citizens. Bangladesh already has 160 million citizens. There is no space. That is why these camps are crowded onto hillsides and carved into the dirt, because there is no place for people to be set up on flat land where it is easy to establish facilities.

These five things are what we must do: first, for our President to be a vocal international leader and bring the international community together; second, to pass the repatriation resolution; third, to bring to the floor and to pass the sanctions bill, the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act; fourth, to send a message to Burma and the rest of the world to invest in the education of the children; and fifth, to give strong international support to Bangladesh, which is doing all it can but is in a very difficult spot to receive so many in an overcrowded and impoverished nation.

Elie Wiesel said: "Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe." Let us then make Burma and the refugee camps in Bangladesh the center of the universe and come to their assistance. I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Rhode Island.

RUSSIAN ELECTION INTERFERENCE

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I come to the floor to continue my series of speeches about Russia's actions in the 2016 election and the threat that Russia poses for the 2018 midterm elections and our national security.

Free, fair, and open elections are the foundation of our country. The Framers created a unique system that has stood for over 200 years and served as a beacon around the world.

Regrettably, the Russian hybrid operations and malign influence against the 2016 election has put the sanctity and security of our democracy in question.

Our duty as citizens and as legislators is to recognize this crisis and take concrete steps to protect our democracy. We must foster a climate of vigilance and Federal-State cooperation when it comes to elections integrity. So today, I wanted to take a moment to review what happened and offer some steps that we should take immediately.

Some may say that there was no interference and that talking about Russia's meddling against our democratic institutions is "fake news." I wish it were "fake news", but the facts are very clear and are acknowledged by experts of every political viewpoint. Let me take a moment to review what happened before I discuss the threat and what we should do.

Fifteen months have now passed since the intelligence community released its assessment, which concluded that the Kremlin attacked the heart of our democracy by interfering with our

elections process. This operation sought to weaken our democratic institutions, amplify and exacerbate societal tensions, and generally sow chaos.

There is clear evidence that the Kremlin sought to influence the 2016 Presidential election. The key findings of the intelligence community's assessment were these:

We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency.

Moscow's influence campaign followed a Russian messaging strategy that blends covert intelligence operations—such as cyber activity—with overt efforts by Russian government agencies, state-funded media, third-party intermediaries, and paid social media users or "trolls."

Russia's state-run propaganda machine contributed to the influence campaign by serving as a platform for Kremlin messaging to Russian and international audiences.

In February of this year, leaders of the intelligence community appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee and reaffirmed these findings. In a related action, in February, the special counsel's office issued indictments against 13 Kremlin-linked trolls for conducting "information warfare against the United States" with the purpose of interfering with U.S. political and electoral processes, including the 2016 U.S. Presidential election.

These tactics are aspects of a larger coordinated operation of hybrid aggression conducted by the Kremlin, using the broad spectrum of military and nonmilitary tools at its disposal. The main tenets of the Kremlin's hybrid operations are these: information operations with cyber tools, which people commonly think of as hacking; propaganda and disinformation; manipulation of social media; and malign influence, which can be deployed through political and financial channels.

Furthermore, throughout this hybrid campaign, Russia has denied its involvement and engaged in deception to hide its fingerprints.

Russia recognizes that, for now, its military capabilities are limited relative to the United States and NATO, and it will seek to avoid a direct military conflict with the West. Instead, Russian tactics leverage their strengths and exploit our open society and free markets in ways that they hope will have a strategic impact without leading to conventional war.

As laid out in the "Russian National Security Strategy" in 2015, the Kremlin's approach to how they respond to conflict includes weaponizing tools and resources from across their government and society.

The Russian strategy states:

Interrelated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, informational, and other measures are being developed and implemented in order to ensure strategic deterrence and the prevention of armed conflicts.

This strategy describes the conventional and nonconventional use of war-

fare as the Kremlin sees it and how Russia has utilized all the tools of statecraft to engage an adversary without, in many cases, actually firing actual shots. These different disciplines together can be called a Russian hybrid approach to confrontation below the threshold of direct armed conflict, which has been developing and escalating since the earliest days of Putin's rise to power.

Russia's attacks have not ceased since the 2016 election. As former FBI Director James Comey so presciently stated about the Russians, "They'll be back."

Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper assessed that the Kremlin has "been emboldened" by the success of their operations to date and warned that hybrid operations "will continue." At a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing in February, CIA Director Pompeo confirmed that the intelligence community has seen "Russian activity and intentions" to affect the 2018 midterm elections.

Director of National Intelligence Coats stated at this same hearing that our intelligence experts expect that Russia will conduct bolder and more disruptive cyber operations in the coming year. The agency heads from across our intelligence community agreed with this assessment.

The warnings from our current and former intelligence officials appear to be spot-on. There has been a steady pace of Russian hybrid operations deployed against us, our allies, and partners, with varying degrees of intensity and mixes of tools and methods. The techniques unleashed against us in the 2016 elections as laid out by our intelligence community were deployed with maximum intensity during last year's French Presidential elections. There was also evidence of hybrid operations against the German Federal elections held in September of 2017. Kremlin-linked trolls targeted the people of Spain, exacerbating divisions during the referendum on Catalanian independence. Outgoing National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said we have seen "initial signs" that the Kremlin is using tools from its hybrid arsenal against the upcoming Mexican elections. After last month's poisoning of the former Russian spy and his daughter on British soil, an estimated 2,800 Kremlin-linked bots were unleashed to cast doubt on Prime Minister May's assessment that Russia was responsible and to amplify divisions among the British people. While the majority of the interference appears to have come from Russia, others are catching on and deploying these tools as well.

As highlighted in the Economist last week, a coalition of Indonesian religious extremist groups used propaganda and disinformation to affect a local election in Jakarta last year. The frontrunner, a Christian, was falsely accused of insulting Islam and huge rallies were organized against him. In the end, he lost to a candidate that