

confirmation hearings. Judge Kavanaugh's will be my 15th and final. He is as qualified and ready to serve as any nominee I have seen to our Nation's highest Court.

I hope that next week, the over-the-top rhetoric and misrepresentations about Judge Kavanaugh will finally cease. Let's make this confirmation about Judge Kavanaugh. Let's make it about his judiciary record and his experience. Let's stop trying to gin up the base by pretending his nomination is a threat to the Republic.

Brett Kavanaugh is an excellent judge and a good man. He will make an outstanding Justice. Next week, the American people will see that for themselves. I think it will be an eye-opener for some people who have been listening to some of the rhetoric thrown his way. I know him well. He is a bright man. He is an honest man. He tells the truth. He writes very well. He will make an excellent addition to the U.S. Supreme Court. He is honest. He is faithful. He is a good family man. He is everything you would want in a Justice on the greatest court in the world. I know him. I support him—not just because he is a Republican or because he gives the Republicans somewhat of an advantage on the Court but because he is one heck of a good person, one heck of a good judge, and one heck of a good student of the law. He is a wonderful man, and I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will see it through in a way that will be an honor to this body, not a desecration.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to complete my brief remarks.

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

REMEMBERING JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, before I speak on another topic I sadly have to come to the floor every week and speak on, I want to offer my heartfelt condolences to the McCain family and all of his friends and supporters.

I had the privilege of serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee with Senator McCain for 3 years. I learned a lot from him. During his entire time in Congress, he did a wonderful job of standing up for the men and women in uniform and standing up for veterans.

I also wanted to share this one story. I had a reporter ask me yesterday: What kinds of experiences have you had with him that were most memorable? It was a day I spent with him in North Carolina back in 2014. I think you can really judge a politician by how they behave when they are not in front of the camera or here at one of the desks in the Senate. When you saw him interacting with men and women in uniform and with veterans, you saw a man with a heart of gold and a commitment to those men and women in uniform.

I want to again tell the McCain family that our prayers are with them and our hearts are with them. We thank them for allowing him to share some of his life here with us in the Senate.

CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF PASTOR ANDREW BRUNSON

Mr. President, now I would like to turn to another sad topic. It is a floor speech that I have had to give over the past few months and sadly may have to give over the next several months. It has to do with someone who has been in detention now for 690 days in the country of Turkey.

In October 2016, this man was detained. He was held in a Turkish prison for almost 19 months, in a cell that was designed for 8 people—it had 21 people in it. This man's name is Andrew Brunson. He is from Black Mountain, NC. He is a Presbyterian minister, and he spent the better part of 20 years in Turkey in a Christian ministry. He opened a church just outside of Izmir several years ago. It is a very small church. They had an open-door policy. Anyone could come in. He had been living there peacefully for 20 years.

In 2016, there was a coup attempt that I still maintain was illegal. It was not the proper way to change government, whether in the United States or in Turkey. The people responsible for that coup should be held accountable to the law. Unfortunately, Pastor Brunson got swept up in the emergency actions that President Erdogan took after the coup attempt, and he was put in prison. He actually thought he was going down to finally get his permanent residency documents in Turkey, which he had been working on for a while, when he and his wife were arrested. His wife was held in prison for about 12 days. Pastor Brunson has been in prison and now detained under house arrest for what will be 2 years in October.

The issue actually came to me as constituent work about a year and a half ago. We were doing everything we could to go through diplomatic channels to try to get Pastor Brunson released. Earlier this year, they finally—after about 19 months in prison without charges, they issued an indictment and read the indictment. It was absurd. I am not an attorney, but I couldn't even understand how—the charges they had levied against Pastor Brunson and the evidence they used to substantiate the charges I don't believe would keep you in jail in the United States overnight. Yet this man had already been held in prison for 19 months. I also heard that he was really concerned. His mental state was down. He lost 50 pounds over about a year and a half. I also heard through diplomatic channels that he was afraid that the American people would read these indictments, believe them, and then turn their backs on him. That is when I requested a trip to Turkey to visit him in a prison and look at him eye-to-eye and let him know that as long as I am a U.S. Senator, he will not be forgotten.

About 6 weeks later, I went back, and I sat through 12 hours of his first hearing—12 hours in a Turkish courtroom. That convinced me that this man was being subjected to a kangaroo court. The legal system there is very different from our own. He has no jury. He is speaking before three judges and a prosecutor who sits up at the dais with the judges. They assume you are guilty unless you prove to them you are innocent. He testified for almost 6 hours that day. We heard from secret witnesses whose voices were scrambled—some of them are in prison—putting forth some of the most absurd charges or allegations you can imagine, but they are enough to keep him in prison.

About a month ago, the Turkish Government did agree—or I should say their judiciary did agree to release him on house arrest. So for about the last month, he has been confined to an apartment he has near Izmir. He has a tracking bracelet on his ankle. As far as I am concerned, he is still in prison.

For the past several months, I have been trying to do everything I could to show respect to the Turkish Government but make it clear that America will not stand for this kind of treatment of an American citizen, particularly from a country that is a NATO ally, a country that we have a treaty obligation to go and defend in a time of any sort of adversarial act. Let's say Russia or some other nation chooses to do something hostile to Turkey. We are obligated to send men and women onto Turkish soil to fight side by side for their freedom. Yet I have an American who has been charged with bogus charges in prison in a NATO ally country. This is the first time that has ever happened in the history of the alliance.

When we talk to the people—the Foreign Minister, President Erdogan, and others—about this, they say: Well, we just have to have our judicial process follow its course. I don't believe that is true. As a matter of fact, I believe we have a President who is inclined to try and do a hostage swap. The reason I believe that is that after they said we have to let the judicial process follow its course, President Erdogan made this statement publicly—that they have someone here who they believe was involved in the coup attempt. We said to them, if they are and can prove it and if we have an extradition treaty, we will extradite that person. They haven't proven it. What they have said to the press is, If you give us our pastor, we will give you your pastor.

Maybe it was just an offhanded comment that he regrets. Maybe he didn't really mean that he is willing to trade someone on U.S. soil for somebody on Turkish soil. Then why, just a few weeks ago, did the administration or administration officials say, "Well, OK, if we can't trade a pastor for a pastor, then if you agree to drop a lawsuit that is against a major banking institution in Turkey, we will give you Pastor Brunson"? If, after two different examples, they haven't proven that

this is a hostage situation, I don't know what is.

Over the past several months, we have had to put a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act to hold Turkey accountable. It relates to Pastor Brunson's imprisonment. It relates to their consideration for buying a Russian-made missile defense system that would never be allowed to inter-operate with the NATO missile defense system. We have also told them that we may have to reconsider whether we would actually transfer Joint Strike Fighter F-35 planes to Turkey and the timeline they are supposed to go there, which would be at the end of 2020.

I hope we get past all of this. I hope that measure in the National Defense Authorization Act is the last one I have to pursue here. Yet, as long as Pastor Brunson is imprisoned in Turkey, I will do everything I can to get the 72 Senators who signed the letter that expressed concern for Pastor Brunson—it is extraordinary to get that many Senators to agree on something in this body—to take it up another notch unless Pastor Brunson is set free.

I hope, next week, I will come to this floor and thank Turkey for doing the right thing in releasing Pastor Brunson and in allowing his wife, Norine, to travel out of the country. I hope, next year or next week, I will be talking about the positive things we can do with the NATO allies to secure their homeland, to improve our trade agreements, and to actually have the relationship with that NATO ally that I want so badly to have. Until Pastor Brunson is released, there is no way on this Earth that I will do anything to make our relationship better.

It is within President Erdogan's power to take this off the table today. I hope that President Erdogan and the Turkish officials hear our pleas. Show us, a NATO ally, the respect we deserve, and free Pastor Brunson.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:48 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

REMEMBERING JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I have been thinking about this, I have been dreading this, and now I am going to do this.

To all of my colleagues who have come before me, you have done right by our friend Senator McCain. The family appreciates all the good words, the kindnesses, and the antidotes that

have come their way. This is a tough time for the family.

John has seven wonderful children.

Cindy, as a devoted wife, you really did well by John.

I am going to try to make this somewhat fun even though I don't feel in a funny mood right now.

Let's start off with the tie. To anybody who may be watching on television, this is a Naval Academy tie.

I wore this today, John, to honor you and to annoy you all at the same time.

He would constantly tell me: LINDSEY, I wish you were in my Naval Academy class.

I would say: Well, that is very nice, John.

Do you know why, LINDSEY?

No, John.

If you would have been in my class, I would have been sixth from the bottom, not fifth.

Thank you very much, John.

Humiliation and affection were constant companions. The more he humiliated you, the more he liked you, and in that regard, I was well-served.

To my colleagues, thank you again so much for what you have done. The only way I know to put this in words that maybe John can relate to is that after a military operation is over, after a mission is complete, the pilot comes back and debriefs. If there is a military operation, you do an after-action report. I thought to myself, what would it say? What would the after-action report for John McCain say? The purpose of these reports is for lessons learned so that we will benefit and make sure that we remember—remember the things that went well and the things that did not so that we will be better off as a unit and as a nation.

The title of the operation was pretty easy—you can say a lot of things about me but “clever” is not one of them—“Operation Maverick.” It began in the fall of 1954 at the Naval Academy—the year before I was born—and it ended August 25, 2018. And what can we learn? The source of the report is me, his political wingman, code named “Little Jerk”—you all have your names, and you earned them like I did—who was lucky enough to walk in his shadow and to witness history up close, to be in the presence of a giant at a time everything around us was so small.

What did I learn? I learned that a few dumb jokes told over and over again actually become funny and can take you a long way in politics, MARCO. I am going to give them to you because John liked you.

He said: LINDSEY, how hot is it in Arizona?

John, I don't know.

It is so hot that the trees chase the dogs.

Well, isn't that funny, John.

He said: What is unique about Arizona?

I said: I don't know, John. I would imagine a lot of things.

Barry Goldwater ran for President and lost. Mo Udall ran for President

and lost. I ran for President and lost. LINDSEY, it is the only place in the Nation where mothers tell their children: You can never grow up to be President.

I say to the Senator from Oregon, remember that. Maybe you can break the string.

He said: LINDSEY, aren't you a lawyer?

Yes, I am, John.

Do you know the difference between a lawyer and a catfish?

No, I don't.

One is a bottom-dwelling, scum-sucking creature, and the other is a fish.

No wonder we did so poorly with lawyers, John.

He said: Do you know why I didn't join the Marines, LINDSEY?

No.

My parents were married.

I am going to miss these dumb jokes.

What else did I learn? I learned how to fight a lot, everything and everybody. I learned how to forgive. And from him, I saw how to heal.

On the fighting side, I learned that the captured warrior who was tortured became the statesman who forgave and healed a relationship between his former adversary and our Nation.

I went to the Hanoi Hilton with John. That is one of the highlights of my life. It is now a museum, and we are the bad guys because they get to write how the museum reads. I remember being in front of his cell, and you could see the wheels turning and the memories coming back. As we walked forward, surrounded by a bunch of handlers—and John McCain was like Elvis in Vietnam. It was the most amazing thing in the world how people adored him in Vietnam. I saw a bunch of photos on the wall of the prisoners playing volleyball and sitting in the Sun with sunglasses on.

I said: John, it must not have been that bad after all.

With a wide smile, he said: I don't remember it this way—which allowed us to get out of Vietnam.

I remember him embracing a war that nobody wanted to talk about because he understood what it would cost to lose it. I remember him supporting the surge when everybody was willing to get out of Iraq because they were so tired of it and saw no way forward. I remember the fighter. I remember the 2008 campaign when, in 2007, John McCain was fifth in a four-person race; written off as politically dead; no money. The “Straight Talk Express” had no wheels.

After a visit to Iraq in July, where General Petraeus allowed him to talk to 600 people who were going to reenlist in a war that they did not have to continue to fight, and about an equal number were becoming citizens because they were fighting for their country and had expedited citizenship—there were two empty chairs in the front with boots, and John asked: What is that all about? Two didn't make it to the ceremony, but they were given their citizenship that day. I remember