

world who rely on DLA for their equipment and resources.

There is also \$35 million for enhanced energy efficiency at Wright-Patterson's National Air and Space Intelligence Center, NASIC. We are so proud to have NASIC in Ohio, and we are happy to see this additional investment in infrastructure for NASIC. Hopefully, the Space Command will end up in Ohio as well.

There is also \$15 million in the bill for construction of a new Guard readiness center in Columbus, OH, which will serve as a staging area for the Ohio National Guard, which is increasingly being called upon to respond to crises. I will have a chance to visit with some of our Guard members next week in Ohio, and I look forward to it.

One of the bill's other important initiatives that has a big impact on my State is authorizing \$1.4 billion to upgrade and modify Abrams tanks. It authorizes about \$847 million to build and upgrade the Stryker armored fighting vehicles. There is also an additional \$378 million to produce 72 Stryker chassis to support the Army's Maneuver Short Range Air Defense Program. This is all really great news for our men and women in uniform. Why? Because they are going to get from Lima, OH, the best equipment in the world to be able to protect themselves and keep the peace. These Abrams and Stryker vehicles are the most advanced and lethal tanks and armored vehicles on the battlefield today.

Of course, this isn't just a big win for our military; it is also great for the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center, which I call the tank plant—always have. It is in Lima, OH, and it is the only facility in the world that can do what they do. It is certainly the only facility in the United States that has the capacity and the highly trained personnel capable of producing Abrams tanks and Stryker armored vehicles. It is a strategic asset for our country and a source of employment for some truly outstanding engineers, welders, and other technicians. I love going to the plant and talking to them about what they do. A lot of them are veterans, and all of them believe that they are part of the effort.

The Obama administration, by the way, 9 years ago, wanted to shutter this plant. They said that we wouldn't need tanks in the future and we should shut down the plant and shut down the line, which would have cost billions of dollars to mothball and then try to start it again. Thank goodness we didn't do that. We fought hard against it. I recognized it was the wrong decision and fought against it every step of the way. I remember, at the time, some of the taxpayer groups were saying: Oh, my gosh, this is somehow inappropriate to keep funding going when the Obama administration says it is not necessary. But it was necessary. It was necessary then, and, boy, it is certainly necessary now. We saved the taxpayers a lot of money by not shutting it down.

We provided enough funding to keep it open partly by bringing in foreign sales, and I helped in that, to try to get other countries to try to use our tank plant, which they have and still do. We also reversed years of backlogged maintenance recently, and we ensured our workers have a safe environment in which to work. So it is doing well now. The lines are humming. Thank goodness we kept it open.

In 2018, I had the opportunity to be the first Member of Congress to see the latest model of the Stryker Dragoon vehicles. They have a 30-millimeter turret—a cannon on top of an armored vehicle. This is a wheeled armored vehicle with a turret on top of it. That 30-millimeter cannon replaced the normal 50-caliber machine gun. The 50-caliber machine gun is effective in certain instances, but the 30-millimeter cannon is much more effective in many places on the battlefield, particularly in Europe, given the threat we face there.

So whether it is in Eastern Europe in the Baltic States or being prepositioned in Germany for the possibility of having to respond, this is what our military wants, what our Army wants, and we have to continue to provide our soldiers this Dragoon variant of the Stryker so that they can deter aggression from Russia and others and help keep our allies safe. This includes, by the way, Ukraine.

Talking about Ukraine, it has been in the headlines a lot over the last several months. I have been to Ukraine several times. I had the opportunity to be on the frontline in Ukraine at what is called the line of contact. Let me tell you, it is not a cold war; it is very much a hot war.

I know that here, on this side of the Atlantic, what is happening in Ukraine can sometimes seem like it is half a world away and maybe doesn't affect us, but it is not far away, and it does affect us. It is very relevant. In a sense, it is where the modern battle is taking place between two very different ideologies, one of freedom and democracy and wanting to connect to the West, and that is modern Ukraine. That is exactly what President Zelensky and the Parliament there and others want to do. The other would be the oligarchy and the corruption of Russia, which want to pull Ukraine back into their orbit.

In Ohio we have a large Ukrainian community, particularly in Northeast Ohio, and they certainly have a vested interest in seeing that their ancestral homeland can defend itself from Russian aggression as it works to align itself more with NATO and the West while promoting the platform of democracy, freedom, transparency, and free markets.

I have met with President Zelensky several times, and I am encouraged by his commitment and his passion to keeping Ukraine on the right track, including fighting corruption. We have to continue as a country to ensure that elimination of corruption continues in

Ukraine. I was pleased to see that Ukraine was very recently designated as a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner, and one day I hope to welcome them as a full member of NATO. We are passing, I hope, a unanimous consent resolution in this body with regard to this issue. We need to be sure and let Ukraine know we support them.

For the past 4 years, I have worked to include provisions in the NDAA, the Defense bill we are working on now, that help expand military assistance to Ukraine and build on the Ukraine military security assistance initiative. This year I was pleased that the bill again authorizes \$250 million in lethal and nonlethal aid to Ukraine. That includes \$125 million in lethal assistance that they need. That is an increase of \$75 million from last year's budget. So we are doing even more to help allow the Ukrainians to defend themselves.

New this year, this bill includes my proposal to require the Departments of State and Defense to develop a new multiyear strategy to support the development of Ukraine's military forces, increasing its capability and capacity and providing a resource plan for U.S. security assistance.

I had the opportunity to speak today to General Dayton, who will be nominated by the President to be the next Ambassador to Ukraine. This is a guy who has done a terrific job of working with the Ukrainian military to modernize the military, to ensure there is more transparency, civilian control, and to be sure they are following the model that will allow them to be successful in recruiting and in fighting against the Russian threat.

There is a lot to like in the NDAA, and I have introduced some amendments that I hope will be included as well. I will continue to advocate for Ohio and for the men and women who keep us safe every day.

I look forward to voting on the bill's passage in the Senate soon so that our troops, who give so much of themselves just to be able to keep us safe, have the resources they need, the best equipment, and the highest level of readiness to be able to fulfill that mission to keep the peace and to continue to secure our liberties.

#### OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. President, I am here on the floor today to talk about some recent troubling statistics that ought to serve as a call to action for every single one of us.

Last Friday, in observance of World Drug Day, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime released its annual world report detailing the impact of drug use and trafficking across the world. Frankly, the report paints a grim picture that reminds us that America has a unique addiction crisis, especially as it relates to opioids.

The report says that in recent years the United States has lost more men, women, and children to drug overdose deaths—60,000 to 70,000 per year—than the next 20 countries combined.

Let me say that again. The United States has lost more people to drug

overdose deaths than the next 20 countries combined. That is unacceptable. This sad comparison of the United States to other countries is a reminder that we have to do better and we can do better.

Even more concerning to me is the recent data we are now receiving about what is happening as a result of the current coronavirus pandemic. It was bad enough, as the world drug report shows, but now, during the last few months, during this pandemic, things have gotten worse.

The Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program is a collaborative Federal organization that tracks overdose data from more than 3,300 emergency agencies. According to data that has been obtained by the Washington Post, fatal and nonfatal overdoses were 18 percent higher in March of this year as compared to March of 2019. They are 29 percent higher this April compared to a year ago and 42 percent higher this May than they were a year ago, in 2019. These are overdoses that are being tracked through EMS, ambulance, hospitals, and emergency rooms. This is really concerning.

One of the findings of this U.N. report was that the most dangerous class of drugs worldwide were opioids, including prescription pain killers, heroin, and the synthetic opioids like fentanyl. These drugs were the cause of about two-thirds of the overdose deaths in the world in recent years, according to the U.N.

The recent data shows that fentanyl use, in particular, has gone up in the United States during this pandemic, especially when it is laced with other drugs, such as heroin, meth, and cocaine. As many of my colleagues know, one of my top priorities in Congress over the last several years has been to combat this opioid addiction crisis that has hit communities in my home State of Ohio so hard. This new information about the resurgence of addiction is particularly discouraging because in recent years we have made great progress. We had actually, finally, after years and years of increased overdose deaths every single year—finally, in the last few years, we had begun to see a reversal of that, and here we have, during this pandemic, the opposite happening.

In 2017, Ohio's opioid overdose death rate was almost three times the national average. We were one of the top three States in the country in terms of overdose deaths. Nearly a dozen Ohioans are dying from these drugs every day, surpassing car crashes as our country's top killer among young people and, for Ohio overall, the State's No. 1 killer. But that next year, in 2018, we were one of the leaders in turning the tide with a 22-percent reduction in 1 year in overdose deaths. That was the same year, by the way, when national overdose deaths also declined for the first time since 1990. Think about that. From 1990 to 2018, it increased every year, and finally we saw a reduction. In Ohio it was a significant reduction.

Over the last couple of years, prior to the coronavirus, we continued to make steady progress—not 22 percent, but we made steady progress in declining. We achieved these strides, in part, thanks to legislation we passed in this Congress—a significant commitment of new resources by the Republicans and Democrats on this floor and by the administration. The CARA Act and CARES Act provided local and State governments and nonprofit groups with additional resources to help use proven prevention treatment and recovery programs effectively.

I was the author of the CARA legislation. We spent 4 years putting it together, with national folks coming in from all over the country helping us, and we put together something that made sense and that was actually working.

We have also ensured that our first responders on the frontlines of this crisis had the resources they need, including the miracle drug Naloxone, which reverses the effects of an overdose.

This kind of continued support was critical for our communities making the progress we have made in combating the disease of addiction, and I have been proud to help lead the effort at the Federal level, although at the State level and local level everybody has kicked in, including so many volunteers and so many families, and it has made a difference.

But these new reports show that now we are going the other way. We have a long way to go in this fight against the addiction crisis in America, and I am afraid we are in danger now of taking a step backward.

Thanks to the coronavirus, our lives have changed in so many ways. Many individuals who have lost their jobs have had to radically change the way they work. Unfortunately, the disruptions have extended to this field of addiction treatment as well.

As States have begun to order a suspension of elective procedures—this happened back in March and April—people were not able to get elective procedures in hospitals, and there was a shift toward more telehealth to help preserve the personal protection gear, the PPEs, for frontline workers. Many patients and caregivers who relied on face-to-face interaction and around-the-clock care to be able to stay the course on recovery from drug addiction and from mental health issues have lost vital access to care. I think that is one of the reasons we see this uptick. Some have fallen off their treatment plans, and some have relapsed.

Unfortunately, this is happening right now as we talk. If we combine that with the feelings of isolation so many people feel being quarantined or being isolated, the feeling of frustration, the feeling of despair many Americans have felt with these dual healthcare and economic crises, you have a perfect storm for the resurgence in opioid deaths. That is exactly what has happened in Ohio and around the country.

Officials in Hamilton County, which is Cincinnati, OH, where I am from, stated there were 42 overdose deaths in May and that at least 23 people died in June. In Cuyahoga County, our State's most populous area and the home of Cleveland, the medical examiner's office has reported 235 fatal drug overdoses so far in 2020 and at least 66 fatal heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine overdoses in May alone. Those figures, by the way, match the deadliest months for overdoses on record in the county, and that would be back in 2017.

Remember, we talked about how the deaths are going up year after year, and 2017 was the peak, and then they went down in 2018. Well, this year already, in Cleveland, we are back up to where we were in 2017. The Columbus coroner's office has had to move to a space three times larger than its old office to accommodate the increases in overdoses and overdose deaths. We are not alone in this uptick. According to the Center for Optimal Living, 30 States have seen an increase in overdose deaths during this pandemic.

The Federal response to the coronavirus pandemic has included certain measures to ensure those suffering from addiction can continue to get the care they need, and I am glad we were able to provide some provisions both in the CARES legislation that was passed about a month ago but also the other legislation we passed around that time.

We have done a number of things to cut redtape and the regulatory relief to expand telehealth and telehealth options specifically for opioid treatment, as well as increasing the number of alternate delivery methods for patients quarantined at home so they can maintain their access to opioid treatment providers. These reforms have been helpful in offering a lifeline for those working hard to stay sober and clean, and, in some instances, according to addiction and mental health leaders from across the State, these reforms have even allowed addiction specialists to reach new patients who were hesitant to come into the doctor's office in the first place, sometimes due to the stigma that attaches to addiction.

These aren't perfect solutions, of course, because the numbers show that addictions are actually up, but ultimately, they have been helpful. We are going to have to find a way to get a handle on this coronavirus pandemic in a way that we can resume these traditional in-person addiction treatment services that have helped so many recover from this debilitating disease. We are going to have to ensure that we can get away from some of this isolation and sense of disparity that people feel.

One thing we do know is, the benefits of telehealth for treating addiction are real, and I think we should act now in this next COVID-19 bill that we are talking about passing next month or maybe even later this month. That legislation, in my view, should include provisions that allow providers to have

the flexibility to continue to offer alternative forms of care via telehealth to people when this pandemic is over so the providers can readily adapt in the event that another pandemic or another disaster forces us to shift healthcare services back to virtual care. We need to continue telehealth now and provide the reimbursement but also ensure that it is going to be there for the future because it is working.

I am committed to working with my colleagues on bipartisan solutions to the challenges we talked about today. Yesterday, I introduced legislation called the Telehealth Response for E-prescribing Addiction Treatment Services Act, or TREATS Act, to make permanent a number of temporary waivers for telehealth services and bolster telehealth options for addiction treatment services. Specifically, the bill is going to do a couple of things.

First, it will allow for a patient to be prescribed lower scheduled drugs like Suboxone or buprenorphine through telehealth on their first visit. Current law requires you go to an in-person visit when needing any controlled substances, but this has been a deterrent to patients in crisis and in urgent need of treatments from schedule III or IV drugs.

Our bill is important. By the way, it also limits abusive practices by limiting telehealth visits to those who have both audio and video capabilities to be able to interact with the treatment providers to reduce fraud and abuse when it is your first visit. It would also prohibit prescribing schedule II drugs like opioids that are more prone to being abused through these telehealth visits. So we have provisions in there to avoid abuse, but it is important to continue this telehealth when the other options aren't there.

Second, our bill would allow for Medicare to bill for audio-only or telephone telehealth visits if it is not the patient's first visit. In-person visits or telehealth visits with video components are important, and I think it is important to have that on the first visit because they can allow for more robust checkups and evaluations.

Due to distance or access to broadband, these types of appointments aren't always possible. We still need to focus on safety and robust treatment options, but in order to balance the needs of patients, we have proposed to allow our Nation's seniors to use phones for subsequent behavioral health visits when they do not have access to the internet.

There is no question that the greatest priority facing our country at this moment is this unprecedented coronavirus pandemic, but this new U.N. report and the rising number of overdoses in Ohio and around the country show that there is even more at stake here than we realize. We know of the direct impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, but losing ground on addiction and behavioral health is one of the

indirect casualties. Not only must Congress ensure our addiction health services have the resources they need to adapt to this new reality, but we also have to redouble our efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus so we don't lose ground on this addiction crisis just as we were making progress and that we don't keep more Americans from achieving their God-given potential.

#### PROTESTS

Mr. President, I hadn't planned to talk about this, but I was watching the floor earlier today when there was a heated discussion on the Senate floor about the chaos and violence we have seen on the streets in many of our great cities.

The peaceful demonstrations, which developed really spontaneously after the tragic death of George Floyd and other injustices, delivered a powerful message about the need to address racial disparities and about the need for police reforms.

The right to demonstrate peacefully must be protected, but the looting, the desecration of monuments, the arson, and the destruction of property, including small businesses in some of these communities of color—it breaks my heart to see some of these small business owners talk about what they are going through; the injuries to our law enforcement officers who are just doing their jobs, doing what they are asked to do in a professional way; and, of course, the self-appointed statue destroyers we have seen. This lawlessness, in too many instances, must not be tolerated. Those who have exploited the situation and the peaceful demonstrations to foment this violence are undermining the cause of the peaceful marchers and further dividing an already polarized country.

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

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

S. 4049

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss what I believe is an important and consequential matter at this moment: the way ahead for U.S. relations with our friend and partner, Israel.

The pending legislation before us includes a plan to codify and extend a multiyear commitment of American security assistance to Israel. Specifically, it would codify a memorandum of understanding reached during the Obama administration to provide \$38 billion over 10 years in security assistance to Israel. That is \$3.8 billion a year. That is a significant promise. In fact, on an annual basis, that \$3.8 billion represents over half of current U.S. foreign military funds around the world.

It is a big commitment, especially at a time when we are struggling to invest in supporting our workers, our businesses, and our economy here at home during this global pandemic.

While it is a sizable commitment, it is one I have supported because Israel is a close ally and friend that lives in a very dangerous and volatile part of the world. It is surrounded on many fronts with enemies who would like to destroy it, including Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah.

Moreover, Israel and the United States have a variety of shared interests. Most importantly, in my view, the United States has an enduring obligation to support a secure homeland for the Jewish people after the horrors of the Holocaust.

Under normal circumstances, I would not even come to the Senate floor today. I have consistently supported the security assistance, and I still do. So why am I here today?

I am here because while I remain strongly committed to the security of Israel and providing security assistance, I am also strongly opposed to Prime Minister Netanyahu's declared intention to unilaterally annex parts of the West Bank starting this month.

The unilateral annexation of parts of the West Bank would totally undermine what has been, at least until the Trump administration, bipartisan American policy in support of a two-state solution that would ensure the security and the rights of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Under the leadership of President Harry Truman, the United States championed the establishment of the State of Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people, and that remains a steadfast American commitment. But the right to a secure homeland for the Jewish people does not include the right to unilaterally annex territories on the West Bank and deny the Palestinian people a viable state and homeland of their own.

So I will say it again: The United States should support and continue to support the legitimate security needs of Israel, but we also need to stand up for a just two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for the rule of law and international order that the United States has championed ever since the end of World War II.

Now, as I said before, the bill before us would codify and extend the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Israel on security assistance signed on September 14, 2016. You can be sure that that memorandum of understanding for security assistance never contemplated Israel's annexing parts of the West Bank.

In fact, the opposite is true. Part of the American rationale for providing Israel with robust military assistance has been to give Israel the confidence to seek a secure peace based on a two-state solution.

Here is what National Security Advisor Susan Rice said in the Treaty