

I have a news flash for everyone who is trying to act like companies selling their products to every community they can is something new or some new nefarious conspiracy. Get this: Gay and trans people drink beverages; they eat food; they buy things. And for suddenly everyone to be outraged over some cute baby clothes? You know what? LGBTQ have families, too. They are parents and aunts and uncles and grandparents. Where have you been?

They are queer; they are here; and they have been for years. Get used to it. They are not going anywhere.

And let's be clear: These attacks on the LGBTQ community are not just ridiculous, they are dangerous, because we are not just talking about a handful of far-right voices complaining about companies. There is a truly insidious and ugly effort to demonize and ostracize and erase the LGBTQ community and our trans friends, neighbors, and loved ones in particular.

Far-right lawmakers across our Nation and across different levels of government are spewing some of the most hateful rhetoric, peddling some of the most bigoted conspiracies, and passing some of the most hateful LGBTQ laws I have seen in a long while.

Over the past few years, these far-right politicians have taken books with LGBTQ characters off the shelves. They have demonized drag performers with dangerous rhetoric. They have investigated parents for helping their kids get the care they need and blocked kids from that care. It is extreme, cynical, and hateful to a degree that is even hard to believe.

Far-right legislators are happy to ignore the First Amendment to ban books and keep kids away from their entirely made-up danger of drag shows; but they are nowhere to be found when it comes to a serious discussion of the Second Amendment and protecting kids from gun violence—an actual public health threat and the leading cause of death for children in the United States.

One Republican Presidential candidate is shamelessly and falsely suggesting that trans kids participating in youth sports might be to blame for the teen mental health crisis and insidiously ignoring the reality that the same kids they are using as a political punching bag face some of the highest rates of depression and suicide of anyone.

Another Republican Presidential candidate championed a bill that is silencing and erasing LGBTQ kids and parents and teachers from schools by banning discussion about gender identity and sexual orientation and banning books with the slightest acknowledgment that LGBTQ people even exist. One school district in Florida even banned a kids' book about a penguin—a penguin—with two dads. Seriously?

Then there is the wave of laws we are seeing that are meant to cut kids off from age-appropriate, gender-affirming healthcare that they rely on, like the

law that passed in Idaho, right across the border from my State, that criminalizes doctors for providing kids with gender-affirming care that they need—care that is overwhelmingly recommended by medical experts as safe and even lifesaving—or the vile effort to falsely accuse loving parents whose kids are getting this care they need as child abuse.

I said it before. It truly feels like far-right Republican lawmakers are in a race to the bottom in pursuit of the most extreme, hateful agenda they can think of. And their attacks have been especially cruel to the trans community and to trans kids.

There are real consequences to this hateful rhetoric. We know the trans community is more likely to face suicide and homelessness and violence, and yet far-right lawmakers are using their megaphone and their positions of power to bully kids.

That is what it comes down to. They are attacking people—attacking kids—for being different, for being themselves.

I said it last year on the Senate floor. I am here again because I still have to say it: We—all have a responsibility to stand up and make clear that this is not right. Trans people are our friends. They are our neighbors. They are our families. They deserve to be kids—just kids—to play sports and go to school and see a doctor and get healthcare. They should be able to get the same opportunities as any other kid to learn and grow and play and thrive, free from fear and discrimination. And parents deserve to be able to make their own parenting decisions with their medical providers to do what is best for their kids' health. They should not have to worry about what a right-wing politician thinks is best for their child, and they definitely should not live in fear that a State legislature is going to intervene in their parenting decisions and hurt their child.

We have got to push back against these attacks on trans kids every way we can—in the courts, with legislation, through Executive action, and by speaking out and speaking up—which is why I am here today, to tell everyone facing these hateful attacks: You are not alone. You have so many people in your community and in your corner.

I am proud to stand with these kids, their families, and the whole LGBTQ community. This Pride Month, we commit ourselves to making sure that these kids are not just safe in our country, not just welcome in our country, but allowed to be themselves here; allowed to be joyful and confident about who they are in every part of our country.

And in that spirit, I want to share some wisdom from Stella. She is a young trans activist in Washington State who spoke with me last year about the dangerous laws targeting trans communities.

I will quote her:

Opinions cannot stop us from existing. They cannot stop me from living my dream to the fullest and following all of my dreams . . . And opinions do not change who we are as transgender and nonbinary people.

I certainly am proud to be a voice for young people like Stella here in the United States Senate. Stella, I hope you are having a great Pride Month.

My message today to everyone who has been encouraging or complicit in the attacks on the LGBTQ community is simple: First, leave kids and families alone. You are not their doctor. You are not their parents. You have no idea what they are going through, what they have gone through, or what is best for them. It is not your say, and it is not your business.

Second: Be kind. Be kind. You do not have to bully people because they are different. You do not have to champion hatred and fear or anger. You can make a different choice. It is really not that hard to listen, to learn, to respect, and accept people for who they are, to have compassion. And I promise it will make your world brighter, and your heart will be lighter.

Finally, if you do continue down this dangerous path—bullying kids, erasing LGBTQ people, and demonizing them with dangerous rhetoric, I will rise against you every step of the way, and I will do so with pride.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. ROBERT MENENDEZ,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 23-36, concerning the Army's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Spain for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$48.2 million. We will issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale upon delivery of this letter to your office.

Sincerely,

JAMES A. HURSCH,
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 23-36

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of Spain.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment * \$32.8 million.

Other \$15.4 million.

Total \$48.2 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase: Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case SP-B-WAT was below congressional notification threshold at \$21.87 million (\$12.20 million in MDE) and included one hundred eighteen (118) M982A1 Excalibur tactical projectiles. The Government of Spain has requested that the case be amended to include an additional one hundred fifty-three (153) M982A1 Excalibur tactical projectiles. This amendment will push the current case above the MDE notification threshold and thus requires notification of the entire case.

Major Defense Equipment (MDE): Two hundred seventy-one (271) M982A1 Excalibur Tactical Projectiles.

Non-MDE: Also included is a portable electronic Fire Control System (FCS); Improved Platform Integration Kit; Propelling Charge Modular Artillery Charge System; Simple Key Loaders (SKL); crypto cable; training aids; technical data; U.S. Government technical assistance; transportation; Excalibur spare parts; artillery cleaning sections; new equipment training; repair and return support equipment; support related to collateral damage estimation tables; and other related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Army (SP-B-WAT).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc.: Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: June 14, 2023.

*As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Spain—Excalibur Projectiles

The Government of Spain has requested to buy an additional one hundred fifty-three (153) M982A1 Excalibur tactical projectiles that will be added to a previously implemented case whose value was under the congressional notification threshold. The original FMS case, valued at \$21.87 million, included one hundred eighteen (118) M982A1 Excalibur tactical projectiles. This notification is for a combined total of two hundred seventy-one (271) M982A1 Excalibur tactical projectiles. Also included is a portable elec-

tronic Fire Control System (FCS); Improved Platform Integration Kit; Propelling Charge Modular Artillery Charge System; Simple Key Loaders (SKL); crypto cable; training aids; technical data; U.S. Government technical assistance; transportation; Excalibur spare parts; artillery cleaning sections; new equipment training; repair and return support equipment; support related to collateral damage estimation tables; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The total estimated cost is \$48.2 million.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by improving the security of a NATO ally which is an important force for political stability and economic progress in Europe.

The proposed sale will improve Spain's capability to meet current and future threats and will enhance interoperability with U.S. forces and other allied forces. The enhanced capability will also strengthen its homeland defense. Spain will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor will be Raytheon Company Missile Systems, McAlester, OK. There are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

Implementation of this sale will not require the assignment of any U.S. Government or contractor representatives to Spain.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness because of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 23-36

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology:

1. The M982A1 Excalibur 155 mm, High Explosive Projectile is an all up projectile with Global Positioning System (GPS)-aided precision guidance capability. The Excalibur provides the ability to accurately engage targets at distances up to 25 miles. Excalibur is commonly fired from U.S. Army and Marine Corps towed and self-propelled howitzer systems, including the M777 and M109.

2. The highest level of classification of defense articles, components, and services included in this potential sale is SECRET.

3. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of the specific hardware and software elements, the information could be used to develop countermeasures that might reduce weapon system effectiveness or be used in the development of a system with similar or advanced capabilities.

4. A determination has been made that Spain can provide substantially the same degree of protection for the sensitive technology being released as the U.S. Government. This sale is necessary in furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the Policy Justification.

5. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal have been authorized for release and export to the Government of Spain.

CONFIRMATION OF DILAWAR SYED

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, last week, the Senate confirmed Dilawar Syed to be the Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration with a bipartisan vote. Mr. Syed was the longest pending nomination in the Biden administration, waiting 827 days to be confirmed.

The Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration should

not have been a controversial nomination. Mr. Syed has served our Nation admirably as Special Representative for Commercial Diplomacy at the State Department, where he has helped American companies compete in international markets throughout the world. He has extensive background as an entrepreneur and business leader with an inspiring immigrant success story that is only possible in America. Now that he has been confirmed, he is the highest ranking Muslim American in the Biden administration.

Mr. Syed should have been confirmed unanimously years ago. But regrettably, Senate Republicans chose to play politics with changing excuses designed to obstruct the nomination. Obstruction and delay resulted in the position being vacant for over 5 years. With record numbers of entrepreneurs starting new small businesses, we need a fully staffed SBA.

Senate Republicans criticized pandemic loans that were taken out by Mr. Syed's company, Lumiata, and accused Mr. Syed of being slow to disclose the loans. Mr. Syed testified before the committee that the board of his company had taken out Paycheck Protection Program—PPP—loans from SBA, funds that they were legally eligible to receive. And to his credit, Mr. Syed and his company repaid those PPP loans when they secured an additional round of venture funding. All of this funding was disclosed to the White House during the vetting process, and Mr. Syed was transparent about his financials, even beyond the information asked by the Senate committee questionnaire. Critics tried to claim that he had misled Congress or outright lied. That is simply not true.

Despite his unfair treatment, justice ultimately prevailed, and his nomination passed with bipartisan support from five Republican Senators who were able to judge Mr. Syed on his character and business acumen rather than false attacks.

Many nominees would have given up and decided the attacks were not worth it. With his background, Mr. Syed could have taken a lucrative position in the private sector. But our Nation is fortunate that Mr. Syed did not let this long process deter him from serving the public interest. I join Mr. Syed's family, friends, and colleagues in congratulating him on his perseverance throughout this process and look forward to working with him, Administrator Guzman, and the leadership team at the Small Business Administration.

WILLA CATHER STATUE UNVEILING

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following speech be printed in the RECORD.

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