

our subcommittee overseas STRATCOM, which is headquartered in my home State of Nebraska. STRATCOM does indispensable work at the helm of our Nation's strategic nuclear deterrence.

Over the last 10 years, I have worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle so that we can get key modernization provisions into the annual National Defense Authorization Act. We have continued this vital support in the fiscal year 2024 NDAA, which the Senate will consider this month.

This year, I have also fought to keep the Sea-Launched Cruise Missile Program—or SLCM—fully funded by the NDAA.

In the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, where we have held multiple hearings and briefings, classified and unclassified, with senior military and civilian leaders as well as a number of outside experts, we concluded—again, on a bipartisan basis—that the Biden administration's attempts to cancel the SLCM Program would make our nuclear deterrent less effective in the 2030s and beyond. So we have included a provision in the bill to create a program of record for SLCM. This will prevent the premature cancellation of the program without future congressional consent.

I also fought to secure provisions that would support the Sentinel Program, which will replace our aging ICBMs across the country. This program is the most significant and complex weapons system in recent U.S. history, and it will cover an aggregated land area almost as large as the State of South Carolina.

Both Chambers of Congress are considering their versions of the NDAA this month. I am proud of the work that my colleagues and I have accomplished with this legislative package that is coming to the floor. I urge my fellow lawmakers as well as the President to support the vital measures that we have included in this bill. I will continue to support modernization efforts, and I am confident that we will produce a strong final NDAA to send to President Biden's desk.

But our work in the Senate isn't done when the NDAA passes. We still have to back our defense priorities up with real dollars through the appropriations process. I am a member of the Appropriations Committee, as is the Presiding Officer, and I know that we are committed to working together to be able to allocate all the funds that are necessary so that we can maintain a strong national defense.

The world has changed since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and we are now, for the first time in history, facing two peer adversaries with significant nuclear arsenals. Now is not the time to shortchange our national security. It is a time for us to work together to strengthen our national security. This means that President Biden needs to cooperate with Congress so that we can get our NDAA passed.

America was born by uniting in defiance of outside threats, and we have done it many times since then. I am hopeful that we will live up to our history as new challenges loom.

As a Member of Congress, I will continue working with colleagues from across the aisle to strengthen our national security. For the sake of our safety, our legacy, and our freedom, I urge my fellow Members and the President himself to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to use several props during my remarks.

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

TRIBUTE TO SILAS JAMES HOGG

Mr. KENNEDY. Silas James Hogg. I want to introduce Silas to you, Madam President, to the American people and to my colleagues in the Senate.

I would love to be able to put his photograph up here because he is a fine-looking young man, but for privacy reasons, I have decided not to.

Silas and I go to the same church, so, in some ways, we have kind of grown up together. His mom and dad are Jeff and Shannon Hogg, two wonderful people, two great parents. Silas has a sister named Ellie Grace. Ellie Grace is splendid in her own right. Maybe someday I will come down to talk about Ellie Grace, but today I want to talk about Silas.

Silas is a rising eighth grader. He just finished the seventh grade. Next year, he is going to attend the Brighthouse Learning Academy.

In his spare time, he likes to play with his mom and dad and sister. He is very close to all three of them. He has a motorized bike that he likes to ride around his neighborhood. He likes to play LEGOs. He likes to play video games. He has three pets: two dogs and one cat. Toby and Milo are the pups. Kahn is the cat. Kahn probably rules the roost.

Silas, as I alluded to, is—I hope you are listening, Silas. Silas is whip-smart. He is kind. He is special in every way, and he is what cool looks like.

Why am I talking about Silas? I just want to thank him. Over the break, Silas gave me a present. It was heartfelt from him, I know, and it was heartfelt when I received it.

First, he gave it to me in this envelope. It was very safe. He stapled it together. He gave me a pen. Silas knows I am always losing pens. And he gave me—we are still talking about what it is, but it is a glass stone or crystal. We are in the process of researching it.

But, Silas, I can't tell you how much this meant to me and does mean to me, my new pen—we are not going to lose it; I am going to put it right here—and my new lucky stone.

You are special, Silas. You are special in many, many ways. And I want you to know, Silas, that I am bringing

back home to you—in thanks for your gift, I am going to give you a gift. I am going to give you a gift of the seal of the U.S. Senate.

Silas is one of Louisiana's best and brightest. He has challenges—gosh, we all do—but he rises above them every day.

Thank you, Silas.

NEW ORLEANS

Madam President, let me talk about another subject quickly, one of my cities, my city of New Orleans. It is iconic. The whole world knows it.

I have told this story before. I am going to tell it again because it illustrates my point.

My first job in government was with a reform Governor called Governor "Buddy" Roemer. That was at a time when Japan and its economy—it is still strong today, but it was rising high and looking good back in the late eighties.

Governor Roemer decided to take a trip to Japan to try to entice our Japanese friends to come invest in Louisiana. Governor Roemer came back, and he said: Kennedy, you will never believe what happened to me.

I said: Tell me about it, Governor.

He said: My first meeting, I was meeting with 50 Japanese businesspeople.

He said: I thought I would break the ice, so I asked all of them, "How many of you have been to Louisiana?"

Governor Roemer said three or four people raised their hands. So then he turned to this group of 50 Japanese businesspeople and said: OK. Second question, "How many of you have been to New Orleans?"

He said 25 people raised their hands.

My point, of course, is that New Orleans is special. It is special to the world. It is special to America. It is special to me. I used to live there. My son was raised there for a while. I met my wife there.

Every State and country in the world would love to have a New Orleans. We are 300 years old. We were founded in 1718. We are envied for our food, our music, our architecture, our diversity, our dialects, our merriment, our festivals, our celebration of life. People in New Orleans dance with the music on and without. It is a special city.

But my city, Madam President, has hit a rough patch. Crime is strangling a free people nowhere more than the city of New Orleans. I regret to say this, but it is safer to walk down the streets of Mogadishu than it is some of the streets in my city of New Orleans.

I know others are having a crime problem. It doesn't make me feel any bit better.

Last year, New Orleans was the murder capital of the world. We had 265 people murdered. That is double since 2019. And that doesn't include the burglaries and the carjackings and the break-ins and the thefts and the other crimes of violence, the rapes, the property crimes. Our 9-1-1 program is a mess.

We are trying to deal with this, but we are not just taking it lying down.

We are right now looking for a new police chief, and we need a good one. We need a tried and tested police chief who has experience in a big city, and we are in the process of picking a police chief.

Now, our mayor, who has 2 more years on her term, is in charge of picking the police chief. Our new police chief has to be confirmed by our city council. But, more importantly than our city council, as important as our city council is, our new police chief has to have the confidence of the people of Louisiana and the good people of New Orleans.

Our mayor, as is her right, has decided to handle the selection of the new police chief herself. She has appointed an outside, third-party group to quarterback the selection of the new police chief. That outside, third-party group says it has done a nationwide search. It had 33 applicants for police chief. Apparently—we don't know this for a fact—most of them were not interviewed. Six were. And that is all we know. That is all we know of one of the most important and maybe the most important selection in municipal government in the last decade in New Orleans. Our mayor has shared nothing else with us—nothing, zero, zilch, nada.

To her credit, our mayor has been asked why—and, by the way, that includes our city council. You would think, since the city council has to confirm the new police chief, that our city council would have been brought in from day one, but our mayor decided not to do that.

At a press conference on July 5, our mayor was asked about this secrecy, and here is what she said. I am going to quote our mayor, for whom I have great respect, because I certainly don't want to put words in her mouth. This is what she told the press.

To the press: I have to say you all have a great way of doing that to people. You know you damage people, even though you try to say you are doing it fairly. That is not what I want.

The mayor goes on to say to the press: I don't want to do that for those who look at New Orleans as a place that they want to come and serve, and I definitely do not want to do that for men and women that have responded who are currently serving.

Now, look, I get it. I know all about the gifts and the gaps of our news media. We have an opinion. But you don't have to like or dislike a free press to serve your people. And I can assure you, right now in New Orleans, parts of which look like a scene out of "Mad Max," that the people of New Orleans are vitally interested—not just the press—in who our new police chief will be.

Our mayor has 2 years left to serve. It is going to be a challenge to get a police chief to come to New Orleans and serve for 2 years—uproot wherever she or he is, come to New Orleans for 2 years with no guarantee that a new mayor will reappoint that new police chief. So it is going to be a challenge to begin with.

On top of that, we all in New Orleans have a lot of questions about crime in our city and our new police chief. I just jotted down a few. We want to know if our new police chief believes in broken-windows law enforcement. We want to know if our new police chief—how she or he is going to increase police response times.

We have got great cops in New Orleans. The morale is low. We don't have nearly enough of them. But their response times have tripled in 3 years. I am not blaming it on them, but it is a problem.

In picking a new police chief, we want to know our new police chief's opinion about whether we have enough investigators, about the Federal consent decree that we are under. Has it helped? Has it hurt? Is it time to ask to get out from under it?

We want to know if our new program called Ethical Policing Is Courageous is working. We launched it with high hopes. Is it working? What does our new police chief think about it?

We want to know what our new police chief thinks about our Adopt-a-Block Program. Is it working?

We want to know our police chief's opinion about whether police officers—we are trying hard to recruit them, but we are losing them. We lost 20 percent in the last 2 years. We want to know how our new police chief feels about requiring or not requiring police officers to live in the city. Can they live outside, in the suburbs?

We want to know what our new police chief thinks about computer analytics and camera technology and facial recognition technology.

I can keep going. These are all fair questions. And it is not just the press asking, even though the press is entitled to ask; it is the people of New Orleans because they are scared, because they love our city, because they think it is worth fighting for, because they want justice, but they understand that without order, there can be no justice.

So I say to my mayor of New Orleans with all the respect I can muster: Please, Mayor, please, Mayor, please, with sugar on top, call a press conference. Tell us who has applied. Tell us who didn't make the cut. Tell us why they didn't make the cut. Tell us the criteria that you and your team used, without an interview, to eliminate them. Tell us who the six remaining semifinalists are. Give us their names. Let us hear from them. Give us time to look at their record. Give us time to ask fair but tough questions. And let's make this decision together because we are all going to have to live with it. Please, Mayor, please, reconsider your position. Let's do this together.

Madam President, 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. KAINE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, I rise today to talk about a crisis in our military leadership driven by one of my Senate colleague's decision to place a blanket hold on now more than 250 apolitical nominations of senior military officers. The senior Senator from Alabama has done so. These 250 military nominations are soon to be joined by another 400 or so, which would mean that 650 individuals who volunteered to wear the uniform of this country and to defend the country, even at risk of their own lives, are being blocked in their professional advancement by a Senator punishing them for something they had nothing to do with—nothing to do with.

The Senator is concerned about a policy of the Pentagon's that would allow women servicemembers who cannot obtain reproductive healthcare where they are deployed or assigned to travel to other places to receive that care.

That is currently the way we treat members of the military. If they are assigned at a base in the United States or elsewhere and they need medical care that they cannot obtain where they are assigned, they are able to travel to seek that care. But because the Pentagon, in the aftermath of the Dobbs decision, has said that longstanding policy allowing travel would also apply to women troops seeking reproductive healthcare, the Senator from Alabama has taken the drastic, radical, extreme, unusual step of saying he will block confirmation and approval of now hundreds of our military officers.

I am a member of the Armed Services Committee. I have a child who is a U.S. marine. I want to take the floor today to talk about how destructive this policy is and ask the Republican minority in the Senate to drop this opposition, stop punishing people who are patriotically serving this country.

To be clear, my colleague who has placed a hold on these individuals has stated no challenge with their qualifications. And to be clear, my colleague who has placed a hold on these nominations has never suggested that they had anything to do with the policy he disagrees with. He is just using them as targets because he is dissatisfied with the way the Pentagon is operating.

There is a right way and a wrong way to do this. Before I get to the right way to raise the issue, let me talk about what this means when you are a member of the military and you have your career delayed because a Member of this body decides to hold you up so that you cannot be promoted.

Many of the promotions and appointments in the military that we are obligated to vote on in the Senate occur during the summer. The transition times occur during the summer. Why? Because this is the time, when someone