

Reactor Demonstration Projects Program, and submit a report on a civil nuclear credit program, and to enhance programs to build workforce capacity to meet critical mission needs of the Department of Energy (999). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted yea.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 203, adoption of the Sanders amendment to reduce military spending (1030). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted nay.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 204, adoption of the Marshall amendment to prohibit the flying, draping, or other display of any flag other than the flag of the United States at public buildings (874). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted nay.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 205, adoption of the Kennedy amendment to prohibit allocations of Special Drawing Rights at the International Monetary Fund for perpetrators of genocide and state sponsors of terrorism without congressional authorization (1034). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted nay.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 206, adoption of the Gillibrand amendment to amend title XXXIII of the Public Health Service Act with respect to funding for the World Trade Center Health Program (1065). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted yea.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 207, adoption of the Hawley amendment to extend the period for filing claims under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act and to provide for compensation under such Act for claims relating to Manhattan Project waste, and to improve compensation for workers involved in uranium mining (1058). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted yea.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 208, adoption of the Menendez amendment to reauthorize the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act of 2018 (638). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted yea.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 209, adoption of the Schatz amendment to reauthorize the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (1078). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted yea.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 210, adoption of the Rubio amendment to provide that sums in the Thrift Savings Fund may not be invested in securities that are listed on certain foreign exchanges (523). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted nay.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 211, adoption of the Reed-Wicker amendment: managers package (1087). Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted yea.

I was necessarily absent for rollcall vote No. 212, passage of S. 2226, as amended, an original bill to authorize

appropriations for fiscal year 2024 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes. Had I been present for the vote, I would have voted yea.●

#### NATIONAL WHISTLEBLOWER APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today is National Whistleblower Appreciation Day on the Hill. So today we celebrate and recognize the contributions and sacrifices that whistleblowers make every day for our country.

I have said this many times before, whistleblowers get treated like skunks at a picnic. It shouldn't be that way. Whistleblowers are patriots. This year is special because it marks the 10th anniversary of National Whistleblower Appreciation Day. And I am proud to introduce the National Whistleblower Appreciation Day resolution for the 10th year in a row along with Senator WYDEN and the rest of the Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucus.

As early as the Revolutionary War, the first whistleblower reported fraud and misconduct. On July 30, 1778, the Founding Fathers passed the first piece of legislation to protect whistleblowers in our country. Whistleblowers are critical to the operation of good government. Whistleblowers risk their jobs, livelihoods, and reputations when they blow the whistle on government waste, fraud, and abuse.

Recently, VA whistleblowers approached my office and alerted me of the Agency's failure to secure veterans' sensitive, private information. They also exposed how the failure in security allows for staff to learn the identities of whistleblowers, leaving them vulnerable to retaliation. DEA whistleblowers also have provided important details about alleged contract irregularities and the DEA's failure to root out corruption in its foreign operations. The oversight that flows from this kind of crucial information can help clean house at DEA and save taxpayer money. It can also improve international drug interdiction and save lives. Let's also not forget about the IRS whistleblowers who have recently testified before Congress regarding wrongdoing at the IRS and Justice Department.

As many know, I have had my fair share of Justice Department whistleblowers over the years. Most recently, my public oversight activities regarding the Justice Department and FBI shows that more have come my way. God bless them all.

The information that I have made public, whether it is the VA, DEA, DOJ, or IRS, it is only because of whistleblowers that I am able to do the work. The government hides information that the American people ought to

know about. Simply put, that is wrong and we must ensure that all whistleblowers are fully protected from retaliation and championed for their work.

Accordingly, it is critically important that all Federal Agencies promote openness and transparency. They must also ensure Federal employees know their rights to blow the whistle on wrongdoing, including to Congress. Federal Agencies must protect their employees from retaliation and take appropriate corrective actions against those who retaliate against whistleblowers. For me, there is no middle ground when it comes to whistleblowers. They must be protected and fought for. Full stop.

This year, I introduced the SEC Whistleblower Reform Act to expand protections for whistleblowers and ensure SEC whistleblower awards are made in a timely manner. This bill ensures that these whistleblowers would be fully protected if they report wrongdoing to a supervisor. Since we created the SEC's Whistleblower Program in 2010, it has been a massive success. The SEC reported receiving a record number of whistleblower tips in 2022—over 12,000.

This year, I also introduced the IRS Whistleblower Program Improvement Act. And this week, I have introduced the False Claims Amendments Act and the CFTC Whistleblower Fund Improvement Act.

There is still a lot of work to be done. In April, I wrote to President Biden requesting him to honor whistleblowers by hosting a Rose Garden ceremony on Whistleblower Appreciation Day. I have asked every President since President Reagan to hold a Rose Garden ceremony to honor whistleblowers. No President has done so.

The task of supporting whistleblowers doesn't start and stop on Whistleblower Appreciation Day. It is a year-round job. Whistleblowers are brave men and women who perform an invaluable public service. Again, they are patriots.

Together, one day we are going to get that Rose Garden ceremony.

#### MEMBERS OF THE SENATE NATO OBSERVER GROUP

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in 2018, we reestablished the Senate NATO Observer Group. I ask for the following Republican Senators to participate in the group: TILLIS, cochair; BARRASSO, ERNST, ROUNDS, HAGERTY, MORAN, and SCOTT of South Carolina.

#### 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. 23-54, concerning the Navy's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Romania for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$120.5 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. 23-54

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 Romania.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment \* \$75.5 million.

Other \$45.0 million.

Total \$120.5 million.

Funding Source: National Funds.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):

Sixteen (16) Assault Amphibious Vehicles, Personnel Variant (AAVP-7A1)

Three (3) Assault Amphibious Vehicles, Command Variant (AAVC-7A1)

Two (2) Assault Amphibious Vehicle, Recovery Variant (AAVR-7A1)

Sixteen (16) 50 Cal Machine Guns (Heavy Barrel)

Five (5) 7.62 mm M240B Machine Guns

Non-MDE: Also included are MK-19 Grenade Launchers; M36E T1 Thermal Sighting Systems (TSS); supply support (spare parts); support equipment (including special mission kits/Enhanced Applique Kits (EAAK)); training, unclassified technical manuals, technical data package, engineering and technical support and assistance (including Contractor Engineering Technical Services (CETS)); and other related elements of program and logistics support.

(iv) Military Department: Navy (RO-P-L-WL).

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

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

(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: July 27, 2023.

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

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Romania—Assault Amphibious Vehicles

The Government of Romania has requested to buy sixteen (16) Assault Amphibious Vehicles (AAVs), Personnel Variant (AAVP-7A1); three (3) Assault Amphibious Vehicles, Command Variant (AAVC-7A1); two (2) Assault Amphibious Vehicles, Recovery Variant (AAVR-7A1); sixteen (16) 50 Cal Machine Guns (Heavy Barrel); and five (5) 7.62 mm M240B Machine Guns. Also included are MK-19 Grenade Launchers; M36E T1 Thermal Sighting Systems (TSS); supply support (spare parts); support equipment (including special mission kits/Enhanced Applique Kits (EAAK)); training, unclassified technical manuals, technical data package, engineering and technical support and assistance (including Contractor Engineering Technical Services (CETS)); and other related elements of program and logistics support. The total estimated program cost is \$120.5 million.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by helping to improve the security of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ally which is an important force for political and economic stability in Europe. It is vital to the U.S. national interest to assist Romania in developing and maintaining a strong and ready self-defense capability.

The proposed sale will improve Romania's capability to meet current and future threats by modernizing and ensuring Romania's continued expeditionary capability to counter regional threats. Romania will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment and services into its armed forces.

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

A principal contractor has not been determined for potential sale. There are no known offset agreements proposed in connection with this potential sale.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of U.S. Government personnel but will require the assignment of one (1) contractor representative to Romania for approximately one (1) year to deliver AAVs, related equipment, and support.

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

TRANSMITTAL NO. 23-54

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 mission of the Assault Amphibious Vehicle (AAV) is to maneuver surface assault elements of the landing force and their equipment from assault shipping during amphibious operations to inland objectives and to conduct mechanized operations and related combat support in subsequent operations ashore.

a. The AAV-7A1 family of vehicles includes the personnel variant, which carries troops in amphibious operations from ship to shore, through the surf zone, and to inland objectives. The AAVP-7A1 provides protected transport of up to 25 combat-loaded personnel through all types of terrain.

b. The Command Variant, AAVC-7A1, is an armored assault amphibious full-tracked landing vehicle. The vehicle provides a mobile task force communication center in amphibious operations from ship to shore through surf zone to inland objectives.

c. The Recovery Variant, AAVR-7A1, is an armored assault amphibious full-tracked vehicle. The vehicle is designed to recover

similar or smaller size vehicles. It also carries basic maintenance equipment to provide field support maintenance to vehicles in the field.

d. The 50 Cal Machine Gun (Heavy Barrel) is the standard weapon for the AAVP-7A1.

e. The 7.62 mm M240B Machine Gun is the standard weapon for the AAVC-7A1 and the AAVR-7A1.

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 Romania 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 Romania.

CUBA

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, on May 24, 2023, Congressman JIM MCGOVERN spoke on the House floor about the distressing situation in Cuba, and I want to associate myself with his remarks. He expressed his deep disappointment and frustration, which I share, with the current policy of the United States toward Cuba that amounts to little more than a continuation of the failed policies of the previous administration.

If the consequences of our policy were benign, perhaps one could ignore what is happening on that tiny island of 11 million people. But, as Congressman MCGOVERN described, it is anything but benign. Our policy is contributing, directly and indirectly, to widespread hardships and hunger in Cuba that caused some 313,000 Cubans to abandon the island last year alone, seeking entry to the United States.

As any objective observer of Cuba knows, since long before the Castro revolution, the Cuban people have suffered continuous deprivations and humiliations. Political oppression and severely limited economic opportunities, punctuated by recurrent natural disasters, have circumscribed their lives. Through it all, they have persevered, propelled by their extraordinary ingenuity, national pride, and innate resilience. However, the mass exodus of Cubans in the past two years illustrates how dire the situation has become.

This is by no means the first time that large numbers of Cubans have risked their lives to seek refuge and a better life in the United States, but none were on the scale of recent years. Several factors have led to the current calamity, including punitive Cold War sanctions reimposed by the previous administration and unfortunately kept in place by the current administration.