

## NOMINATION OF TANYA J. BRADSHER

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, with a historic number of veterans receiving care and benefits under the PACT Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs needs a qualified second-in-command.

Now more than ever, the VA needs a steady hand to uphold its mission to deliver veterans the healthcare and benefits that they have earned.

I rise today because Tanya Bradsher is that leader. She has an impressive record of serving our country in and out of uniform, especially in her current role—which is VA Chief of Staff—where she has been critical in overseeing the Department's implementation of the PACT Act.

Between her time serving in the U.S. Army—including a deployment to Iraq—and working in Congress and working at the White House and the Defense Health Agency and at the Department of Homeland Security, it is clear that she is qualified for the job and ready to hit the ground running to serve our Nation's veterans.

It is no secret that the VA has a lot of work on its plate. From rolling out the Electronic Health Record Modernization program to working with the Defense Department to improve transition process for servicemembers who are leaving the military, these are challenges VA's No. 2 official is directly tasked with, all while running the day-to-day operations of the VA.

That is why this body needs to come together in a bipartisan way to make Tanya Bradsher the permanent leader—the leader who will tackle these challenges and ensure that the VA is upholding its mission to the veterans and their families.

The fact is, having a permanent leader in this role ensures that we can hold the VA accountable to do their job. And our veterans deserve no less.

In the past, this body has been able to rise above politics to install qualified individuals at the VA responsible for getting vets the healthcare and the benefits they need and that they have earned. Today, we must do that again to confirm Tanya Bradsher as VA's next Deputy Secretary and making her the first woman ever confirmed for this position.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that this vote occur immediately.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, so ordered.

## CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 261, Tanya

J. Bradsher, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Charles E. Schumer, Jon Tester, Raphael G. Warnock, Angus S. King, Jr., Sherrod Brown, Tim Kaine, Tina Smith, Mark Kelly, Debbie Stabenow, Richard J. Durbin, Jeanne Shaheen, Catherine Cortez Masto, Chris Van Hollen, Alex Padilla, Gary C. Peters, Richard Blumenthal, Margaret Wood Hassan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Tanya J. Bradsher, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF), and the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BRAUN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 49, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 223 Ex.]

## YEAS—49

Baldwin	Heinrich	Sanders
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Schatz
Blumenthal	Hirono	Schumer
Booker	Kaine	Shaheen
Brown	Kelly	Sinema
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Lujan	Tester
Casey	Manchin	Van Hollen
Collins	Markley	Warner
Coons	Merkley	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Welch
Feinstein	Peters	Whitehouse
Fetterman	Reed	Wyden
Gillibrand	Rosen	
Hassan	Rounds	

## NAYS—44

Barrasso	Grassley	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hagerty	Paul
Boozman	Hawley	Ricketts
Britt	Hoeven	Romney
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Lummis	Tillis
Cruz	Marshall	Tuberville
Daines	McConnell	Vance
Ernst	Menendez	Wicker
Fischer	Moran	Young
Graham	Mullin	

## NOT VOTING—7

Braun	Ossoff	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Padilla	
Duckworth	Risch	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 44.

The motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

## AZERBAIJAN AND ARMENIA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a horrific set of events that are taking place in a part of the world that we could do something about.

In this photo, this dead man's body is completely emaciated. The skin, tight over his bones, barely covers his skeleton. Bruises and scars stretch across his chest.

This is not a victim at the side of the road during the Ottoman Turks' Armenian genocide. It is not a holocaust survivor lying on the ground as allies liberated Buchenwald. It is not a human carcass left in the wake of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia or the Hutu in Rwanda or Serbian forces in Bosnia.

It is from the Human Rights Defender's Office in Nagorno-Karabakh, and it is from August—only weeks ago. Because, right now, as the Presiding Officer sits here on the dais and I stand here in the Chamber, the Aliyev government in Azerbaijan is carrying out a campaign of heinous atrocities that bear the hallmarks of genocide against the Armenians in Artsakh. They have purposely and viciously trapped an estimated 100,000 to 120,000 Christian Armenians in the Karabakh Mountains.

There is only one road out connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia for people, food, medicine, and basic supplies. And the Azerbaijanis have blocked it since December of last year.

Now, despite some reports yesterday, no aid has moved. They have tried to deny their role, but make no mistake—the Azerbaijani government is now wholeheartedly embracing this brutal blockade, denying the Armenian community food and fuel and medicine. Aliyev and his regime are trying to starve these people into death or political submission.

“There are no cemeteries and there are no machete attacks,” wrote the former prosecutor at the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, in a recent report. But he said:

Starvation is the invisible genocide weapon. Without immediate dramatic change, this group of Armenians will be destroyed in a few weeks.

This group of Armenians—we're talking about over 100,000—will be destroyed in a few weeks. Not my observations; the observations of the former prosecutor at the International Criminal Court.

In Artsakh, the shelves at stores are empty. Children wait in lines for the chance of finding bread to feed their grandparents who are too weak to leave the house. There is no gas for ambulances. According to the head doctor at one maternity hospital, mis-carriages have nearly tripled. And the BBC reports that one in three deaths in Nagorno-Karabakh is from malnutrition.

For months, Azerbaijan was just doing the bare minimum, allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross limited access. But in July, Aliyev blocked even the Red Cross. And

in complete defiance of the Geneva Conventions, Azerbaijan detained medical patients the Red Cross was transporting through the corridor. This is not only outrageous at face value, but an insult to the international community and a threat to brave Red Cross workers around the world.

In addition to arresting sick and elderly residents a few weeks ago, Azerbaijan also detained university students who were trying to go to Armenia to start the school year. Azerbaijan's foreign ministry says: Oh, there is nothing to worry about. These concerns are just a result of "propaganda and political manipulations spread by Armenia."

Really? They are blaming Armenia for this? That is a flat-out lie.

It was Azerbaijan, with Turkish backing, that launched the war in 2020—a war that uprooted close to 100,000 Armenians from their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh; a war that killed 6,500 people. Now Aliyev blocks the Lachin corridor and says: I am "not organizing ethnic cleansing." The same Azerbaijani President who has also threatened to "chase away" Armenian separatists "like dogs," whose government issued a commemorative postage stamp showing a worker in hazmat gear spraying disinfectant on the region.

We have seen and heard this kind of propaganda throughout history. It is the work of a regime intent on destroying and erasing this ancient Armenian community's history in Nagorno-Karabakh.

And right now, the United States is failing. The United States is not meeting the humanitarian needs or publicly putting enough pressure on Aliyev to stop the campaign of ethnic cleansing.

I sincerely hope the State Department is not considering renewing the 907 waiver which allows for security assistance to go to Azerbaijan. I don't know how the United States can justify spending any kind of support—security or otherwise—to the regime in Baku.

We have seen a video of Azerbaijani forces killing unarmed Armenian soldiers in cold blood. We have reports of Azerbaijani soldiers sexually assaulting and mutilating an Armenian female soldier. So to send them assistance makes a mockery of the FREEDOM Support Act. Section 907 of this act is meant to ban security assistance to Azerbaijan until it is "taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh."

That is the end of the quote from section 907. But still, the Department of State has waived section 907 over and over and over again.

Suffice it to say, I am strongly opposed to having any aid going to a fighting force known for war crimes and the violation of human rights. I understand the dynamics of the broader region are complicated, but our fun-

damental principles underlying security assistance should not be.

When the United States untethers our security assistance from human rights and American values to focus on short-term tactical military assistance, it not only damages long-term American national security interests, it flies in the face of our duty to honor the victims and survivors of the Armenian genocide and our duty to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

We cannot look away from a systematic attempt to eradicate and erase an entire people from the face of the Earth.

In 2021, as my colleagues witnessed here on the Senate floor, I was overcome with emotion to see President Biden join us in recognizing—for the first time of any American President—the Armenian genocide.

More than a century ago, Ottoman Turks perpetrated a systematic campaign to exterminate the Armenian population through killings, through forced deportation, and, yes, through starvation.

What the Turks did is an irrefutable historical fact. The recognition of this fact was a huge step forward, and I am proud to have played a role in that effort. I am proud that I spoke up as many American leaders stayed silent; proud that I pressured State Department nominees and officials to acknowledge this historical reality; proud that I introduced or cosponsored resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide since before I came to the Senate in 2006.

Make no mistake, fighting the denial of Armenian genocide is not only about the past, it is also about the present.

That is why I am calling on Aliyev to immediately release the Armenian prisoners of war. It is why I have been working on legislation to address the current humanitarian crisis in Artsakh. And it is why when USAID Administrator Power came before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee earlier this year, I pushed her to get humanitarian assistance to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

I believe the United States can—and must—play an active role in addressing this conflict because the so-called Russian peacekeepers, who have supposedly been enforcing a ceasefire following Azerbaijan's 2020 invasion, have been—to no one's surprise—wholly ineffective. As Azerbaijani forces began an incursion in September of 2022, these Russian forces stood idly by. Moscow will, no doubt, exploit any instability to its advantage, but they have also proved their lack of worth, which is all the more reason that the United States must continue to play a role.

Now, we have been facilitating talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but we need to change our approach. We cannot continue to simply facilitate talks. We have a responsibility to mediate, to pursue a meaningful enforceable agreement with the guaranteed

rights, security, and dignity of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh as a central tenet. We must also encourage—and if necessary—broker direct discussions between political leaders in Stepanakert and Baku.

Of course, to be an honest broker means we need to tell the truth about Azerbaijan's atrocities. We need to call out those individuals perpetrating this campaign of ethnic cleansing. We need to target them—including President Aliyev—with sanctions. We need to be cutting off their access to the wealth and oil money they have stashed away in financial institutions around the world, to their yachts and mansions across Europe.

The evidence is there, and we must preserve it so Aliyev can be held accountable for these atrocities.

I have called on the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations to introduce a resolution at the UN Security Council enforcing an end to Aliyev's blockade.

I am pleased to see that Secretary Blinken is personally engaging in the crisis now, but the message he delivers must be crystal clear. At the same time, the EU needs to step in too.

Now, I was pleased to see the High Representative Borell's statement in July that the EU is "deeply concerned about the serious humanitarian situation" in Nagorno-Karabakh. But I hope that actions accompany those words. Instead of just taking Azerbaijani gas and praising the country as a "crucial energy partner," they must also bring pressure to end this blockade.

How many leaders have solemnly promised to learn history's lessons and prevent future genocides?

How many people have come to the floor of the Senate and said: Never, never again?

How many people will have to die of starvation before we act?

With Aliyev potentially moving troops along the border, we cannot say we didn't see it coming.

This time must be different. In the past, plans to carry out genocide were clouded by distance or geography. But this time we know. We know Aliyev is doing it right now. We must not only hold him accountable for his actions, we must stop him from succeeding in erasing this Armenian community.

We must stop him from starving these Armenians to death or imposing political control by opening only the Aghdam corridor. This is not a substitution for opening the Lachin corridor. It is not upholding the commitments of the 2020 agreement. Using basic humanitarian food and medical supplies as a political weapon is not acceptable. We have the power to do it—if we act now.

Given the chance, who here among us would not go back and stop the Turks from rounding up the first Armenian victims of the genocide who were hung in the streets of Istanbul or the Serb forces who gave Bosnian Muslims a 24-hour ultimatum to surrender or the Rwandan radio broadcasts inciting violence?

Unlike those times in the past, we are living on the brink right now.

So to the Biden administration, I would say, now is the time to step up and protect this vulnerable population; to the international community, now is the time to work together to bring pressure to stop this tragedy from unfolding in front of our very eyes.

To the Armenian people trapped in this blockade with no food as winter approaches, know that you have friends and allies here in the U.S. Senate and around the world who will not rest until you are safe and secure. Hang on. Hang on.

And to the men organizing and carrying out this brutal campaign, we will hold you accountable for your crimes even if it takes a lifetime. You will pay a price. You will face justice, and I certainly will not rest until you do so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MENENDEZ. 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. 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)(5)(C) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), as amended, we are forwarding Transmittal No. 23-0K. This notification relates to enhancements or upgrades from the level of sensi-

tivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 16-59 dated September 8, 2017.

Sincerely,

JAMES A. HURSCH,  
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 23-0K

Report of Enhancement or Upgrade of Sensitivity of Technology or Capability (Sec. 36(b)(5)(C), AECA)

(i) Purchaser: Government of Bahrain.  
(ii) Sec. 36(b)(1), AECA Transmittal No.: 16-59; Date: September 8, 2017; Implementing Agency: Air Force.

Funding Source: National Funds.

(iii) Description: On September 8, 2017, Congress was notified by congressional certification transmittal number 16-59 of the possible sale under Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act of the possible upgrade of Bahrain's existing twenty (23) F-16 Block 40 aircraft to the F-16V configuration. The requested sale was comprised of twenty-three (23) F110 GE-129 engines (includes 3 spares); twenty-three (23) APG-83 Active Electronically Scanned Array Radars (includes 3 spares); twenty-three (23) Modular Mission Computers (includes 3 spares); twenty-three (23) Embedded Global Navigation Systems/LN260 EGI (includes 3 spares); forty (40) LAU-129 launchers; twenty-three (23) Improved Programmable Display Generators (IPDGs) (includes 3 spares); twenty-five (25) AN/AAQ-33 SNIPER Pods; two (2) AIM-9X Sidewinder Missiles; two (2) AGM-88 High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM); two (2) WGU-43 Guidance Control Unit (GBU) Guidance Control Unit (GCU) (for GBU-24 Paveway III); two (2) BSU-84 Air Foil Group (AFG) (for GBU-24 Paveway III); five (5) KMU-572 Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) Tailkits (for GBU-38 JDAM and GBU-54 Laser JDAM); two (2) GBU-39 Small Diameter Bombs (SDB) Guided Test Vehicles (GTV); two (2) AGM-84 Harpoon Missiles; three (3) MAU-210 ECCG (for GBU-50 Enhanced Paveway II); three (3) BLU-109 Inert Bomb Bodies; four (4) MK-82/BLU-111 Inert Bomb Bodies; and two (2) FMU-152 or FMU-139 Fuzes. Also included were one (1) Joint Mission Planning System; one (1) F-16V simulator; twenty (20) AN/ALQ-211 AIDEWS Systems; one (1) avionics level test station; six (6) DB-110 Advanced Reconnaissance Systems; two (2) LAU-118A Launchers; forty-five (45) AN/ARC-238 SINCARS Radio or equivalent; twenty-three (23) AN/APX126 Advanced Identification Friend or Foe (AIFF) systems or equivalent; twenty-three (23) cryptographic appliques; two (2) CATM-9L/M; two (2) AIM-120C-7 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM) Captive Air Training Missiles (CATM); three (3) MXU-651 AFG (for GBU-50 Enhanced Paveway II); four (4) DSU-38 Precision Laser Guidance sets (PLGS) (for GBU-54 Laser JDAM); four (4) AGM-154 Joint Stand-Off Weapon (JSOW) Captive Flight Vehicles (CFV); three (3) MK-84/BLU-117 Inert Bomb Bodies; two (2) FMU-152 D-1 Inert Fuzes; three (3) BRU-57 Bomb Racks; two (2) BRU-61 Bomb Racks for SDB; two (2) ADU-890 SDB adapter cable for CMBRE; two (2) ADU-891 AMRAAM/AIM-9X adapter cable for CMBRE; telemetry for all flight test assets secure communication equipment; personnel training and training equipment; publications and technical documentation; U.S. Government and contractor technical support services; containers; missile support and test equipment; integration test; site survey; design; construction studies/analyses/services; associate operations, maintenance, training; support facilities; cybersecurity; critical computer resources support; force protection; and other related ele-

ments of logistics and program support. The estimated total cost was \$1.082 billion. Major Defense Equipment (MDE) constituted \$406 million of this total.

On September 28, 2018, Congress was notified by Congressional certification transmittal number 18-0C of the possible sale, under Section 36(b)(5)(C) of the Arms Export Control Act, of:

1. The inclusion of twenty-three (23) Multifunction Information Distribution System Joint Tactical Radio System (MIDS-JTRS) Concurrent Multi-Networking-4 (CMN-4) which are MDE;

2. The inclusion of an additional nineteen (19) AN/ALQ-211 Advanced Integrated Defensive Electronic Warfare Suite (AIDEWS) Systems (non-MDE), which will increase the number from twenty (20) to thirty-nine (39). These additional nineteen (19) were not included in the total value of the AIDEWS systems previously notified. This change was due to a change in system requirements and a desire to prioritize system components with long lead procurement timelines; and

3. The inclusion of additional test weapons quantities and MDE designations outlined below:

a. BLU-109—Increase from quantity of three (3) to four (4).

b. Bomb Practice GBU-39 Guided Test Vehicle (GTV)—MDE item not on original notification.

c. MK-82 Inert Filled Bomb Body—Increase in quantity of four (4) to six (6)—MDE not on original notification.

d. KMU-572 JDAM Tail Kit—Quantity of five (5) not included on original Congressional Notification and MDE designation not on original notification.

e. MXU-650 Air Foil Group—Quantity of two (2) not included on original Congressional Notification and MDE designation not on original notification.

f. MXU-651 Air Foil Group—MDE designation not on original notification.

g. MAU-210 Enhanced Computer Control Group—Increase in quantity of three (3) to four (4) and MDE designation not on original notification. Also, correct that this MAU is for the GBU-49, not the GBU-50 as outlined in the original notification.

h. FMU-152—Quantity of six (6) not included on original Congressional Notification and MDE designation not on original notification.

These changes were due to unit pack minimum required quantities, items not properly identified as MDE on the original notification, and errors in requirements identification by the procuring office.

The inclusion of these MDE items did not increase the value of MDF beyond what was originally notified. The inclusion of AIDEWS caused the total case value to rise from \$1.082 billion to \$1.292 billion.

On October 1, 2019, Congress was notified by Congressional certification transmittal number 0T-19, under Section 36(b)(5)(A) of the Arms Export Control Act, of the inclusion of an additional five (5) AN/AAQ-33 SNIPER Pods, which increased the number from twenty-five (25) to thirty (30). These additional five (5) were not included in the total value of the SNIPER Pods previously notified. The addition of these items resulted in a net increase in cost of MDE of \$11.6 million. The revised MDE total value was \$417.6 million. The total case value remained \$1.292 billion.

This transmittal notifies the following change in MDE items: the "twenty-three (23) Embedded Global Navigation Systems/LN260 EGI (includes 3 spares)" previously notified will be changed to "twenty-three (23) Embedded Global Navigation Systems/LN260 EGI (includes 3 spares) and/or EGI devices with M-code technology." The following non-MDE