

Army's helicopter fleet. The crash helicopter equipment was improperly installed and hadn't been working for more than 700 days. The Army never caught it. In fact, the helicopters in the battalion, 8 of 16, could not even transmit when required to do so because of maintenance failures. There is a really big issue that we are going to hear a lot more about in January from the NTSB, and that is that the altimeters on the helicopters were also unreliable.

My sense is the NTSB is doing really important engineering investigative work now to find out why those altimeters were so off. This is important to know because, again, if we are going to pass a bill saying, "Go ahead, military, operate in the commercial airspace" and you don't even have good altimeters, it presents even more risk. When the NTSB tested three other Black Hawk helicopters over the Potomac, their barometric altimeters showed the helicopters 80 to 130 feet lower than they actually were.

So it just says that something is not working on these helicopter systems. Good investigative work—if you watch any of these shows, mid-air collisions, any of these things that document what the NTSB does—you will find that good engineering will come up with what is the problem with these helicopters on the altimeters, and they will tell us something important that we needed to know.

But we should not be flying helicopters around close to commercial aviation space, within a few hundred feet, when we know they aren't even accurate. In a crash that happened at 278 feet, this kind of error is the difference between life and death. This is the same Army that section 373 would trust to conduct its own risk assessment and decide when it is safe to broadcast their location. Again, why are we allowing military helicopters to fly within a few hundred feet of commercial planes?

The Lilley family, who lost their son, First Officer Sam Lilley in the crash, called out these waivers directly, stating, "The National Security waivers allowed by this draft are deeply concerning. This bill addresses that with a window dressing fix that will allow it to continue setting aside requirements with nothing more than a cursory risk assessment."

Section 373 only applies to a training flight. It does nothing to address VIP transport operational missions or other military flights that happen around DC every day. Even if this provision were good policy, which is not, it would still leave the majority of military operations near commercial aircraft completely unaddressed.

So what we have here is a provision that rolls back the post-crash requirements that were agreed to by the FAA. It codifies a Federal loophole that the military has already used, and basically, in an environment where a crash was caused, it substitutes a technology

standard that didn't prevent the crash to begin with and is not the recommendation of the Agency charged with telling us what kind of improvement should be made. And it creates a broad waiver with no meaningful oversight.

That is how we got into this situation. Let's say, for instance, there was a need for military aircraft up and down the Potomac close to—close to—the commercial flights. You would still set standards, and you would have oversight, but we had thousands of incidents of alarm bells going off, and nothing happened. Nothing happened to fix it. Nobody at the FAA, nobody at the military—nobody fixed it. And now, unfortunately, so many people have lost their loved ones.

So what is in this bill is not safety reform. It creates the appearance of reform, but it is not. That is why Senator CRUZ and I and Senators MORAN and DUCKWORTH have been working on comprehensive legislation, the bipartisan ROTOR Act, and would have loved that, instead, to be in this legislation. It is bipartisan. It basically is many of the recommendations that we have already heard from the National Transportation Safety Board that would make all of us, including those who fly on these flights, safer.

The difference between our legislation and what they are talking about—well, as I mentioned, on January 29 the Black Hawk wasn't transmitting, so it was essentially invisible. We want to make sure that we know where flights are.

Our bill would set a national standard to ensure safer separation between military and commercial aircraft, not just in Washington, DC, but everywhere—San Diego, Tampa, Norfolk, anywhere where military and civilian aircraft share the skies. The Flight 5342 families agree. They have said, "We continue to call for swift passage of the bipartisan ROTOR Act, which is a strong first step in addressing comprehensive nationwide reforms to ensure the tragedy like Flight 5342 never happens again."

That is why we worked so hard. We are not even saying the ROTOR Act is the final piece. As I said, the NTSB will make more announcements in January in their recommendations and their findings. But I know this, we should not be passing the National Defense Authorization Act with a huge loophole that is putting the flying public at risk.

I hope our colleagues will realize this and work together to get this provision out of the legislation. I hope that you will think about the 67 families who lost their loved ones in this tragedy that was preventable. I hope that we will consider making sure that all our colleagues understand that transportation safety is not a one day on the job issue. It is a constant in which we have to be vigilant about why it is so important to follow the rules and make sure the flying public is safe.

The stakes are too high. Let's not go backward on aviation safety. Let's get this section out of the bill, and let's pass the ROTOR Act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate 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.

U.S. SENATE MEMBER PROTECTION REGULATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD updated "Member Protection Regulations."

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

U.S. SENATE MEMBER PROTECTION REGULATIONS ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION ON DECEMBER 11, 2025

1.0 SCOPE—These regulations detail the permissible expenditures and voucher process a Member shall use to procure personal security devices, physical security enhancements, and personal security services for the Member's safety and well-being.

2.0 DEFINITIONS—For purposes of these regulations, the following terms have the meaning specified.

2.1 Capitol complex means the Capitol Buildings as defined in 40 U.S.C. §5101 and the United States Capitol Grounds as described in section 40 U.S.C. § 5102(a).

2.2 Member means a U.S. Senator.

2.3 Non-structural security enhancements include devices such as security hardware, locks, alarm systems, motion detectors, and security camera systems.

2.4 Personal security device means an item used for personal security, except that such term shall not include any item prohibited in the Capitol Police Board prohibited items list, which is incorporated into these regulations as Section 4.1.

2.5 Personal security entity means a person or company that provides bona fide, legitimate, and professional private security services acting within the scope of applicable laws. A personal security entity may also include, or extend its services through, off-duty, deputized, retired, or otherwise authorized law-enforcement officers.

2.6 Personal security services means services provided by a personal security entity that may include the continuous protection of the Member, the continuous protection of the Member's residence(s) regardless of the Member's physical location, secure transportation, and travel-related measures designed to support threat mitigation.

2.7 Physical security enhancements means non-structural security enhancements and structural security enhancements.

2.8 Rules Committee means the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration.

2.9 SAA means the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate.

2.10 SOPOEA means the Senators' Official Personnel and Office Expense Account.

2.11 Structural security enhancements include devices such as wiring, lighting, gates, doors, and fencing, so long as such devices are intended solely to provide security and not to improve the Member's property or increase its value.

2.12 USCP means the United States Capitol Police.

3.0 General Information—in addition to the permissible expenditures detailed in Section 4.0, Members may utilize the following additional resources:

3.1 Law enforcement coordination. The SAA and USCP may enter into mutual aid agreements for law enforcement support for Members.

3.2 SAA Procurement. The SAA may support Members by providing concierge security management and coordination for Members, including liaison activities between federal, state, local, and private security entities, procuring personal security devices and services, and physical security enhancements using SOPOEA funds, upon written delegation of such authority by a Member.

3.3 SAA Residential Security Program. The SAA Residential Security System Program provides physical security support to Members at their residences at no cost to the Senator. Physical security support can include electronic security systems, security monitoring, and other physical security enhancements recommended by the USCP.

3.4 Use of Campaign Funds. Before using campaign funds, Members should confer with the Senate Select Committee on Ethics and the Federal Election Commission to ensure compliance with applicable ethics and campaign finance rules.

4.0 Permissible Expenditures—Each Member may use funds made available to the Member from their SOPOEA to pay for certain security products or services. Any conditions or circumstances pertaining to Member protection not covered by the following regulations must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Rules Committee.

4.1 Personal security devices. Each Member may obtain a personal security device for use by the Member so long as the device is not:

4.1.1 Ammunition;

4.1.2 Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Substances;

4.1.3 Chemicals or other damaging liquids;

4.1.4 Destructive Devices, Explosives, or Combustible Chemical Compounds and Mixtures (gasoline, gunpowder, fireworks, flares, Molotov cocktails, or replicas of explosive devices);

4.1.5 Disabling Chemicals (bear spray, tear gas, poisonous chemicals or gases, or other chemicals designed for self-defense);

4.1.6 Drones/UAS;

4.1.7 Firearms (any weapon that expels a projectile with an explosive);

4.1.8 Handcuffs, Flex Cuffs, or items that can be used as restraints;

4.1.9 Impact Weapons (batons, blackjack, clubs, maces, slungshot, etc.);

4.1.10 Knives, 2.5 inches or more, to include sharp tools, pointed objects or implements such as a switch blade, dagger, dirk, sword, etc.;

4.1.11 Realistic replicas of explosives, firearms, or other weapons to include toy weapons;

4.1.12 Tasers, Stun Guns; or

4.1.13 Weapons of any kind or any other item determined by the USCP to be a potential safety hazard.

4.2 Physical security enhancements. Each Member may obtain non-structural or struc-

tural security enhancements such as a security system or other security support for any residence of the Member so long as:

4.2.1 The physical security enhancements are intended solely to provide security and not to improve the Member's property or increase its value; and

4.2.2 Neither the Member, any relative of the Member, nor employee of the Senate has an ownership or financial interest in the entity providing physical security enhancements.

4.3 Personal security services. A security entity, including local or state law enforcement, may be hired to provide personal security services for the Member so long as:

4.3.1 The personal security services provided under the contract are being provided only for the protection of the Member or their residence(s);

4.3.2 The personal security services abide by all Capitol Police Board regulations, and Capitol Police policies and procedures while in the Capitol Complex; and

4.3.3 Neither the Member, any relative of the Member, nor employee of the Senate has an ownership or financial interest in the personal security entity providing the services.

5.0 Submitting Expenditures—Members shall submit expense vouchers, approved by the Senator and certified by designated staff, with supporting documentation that shows evidence of actual expenses incurred and, if seeking reimbursement, evidence of payment. Office Purchase cards may not be used for the purchase of any member security expenditures.

5.1 Personal security device vouchers. Personal security device vouchers shall be reimbursed to the Member and shall include the following certifications:

5.1.1 The personal security device was purchased by the Member, or procured by the SAA on the Member's behalf;

5.1.2 The personal security device is intended for sole use by the Member for their own personal protection; and

5.1.3 The Member, or the SAA on the Member's behalf, has reviewed the list of permissible and prohibited devices in Section 4.1 and certifies the device being purchased is not prohibited.

5.2 Physical security enhancement vouchers. Physical security enhancement vouchers may be paid directly to the physical security provider or may be reimbursed to the Member. These vouchers shall include the following certifications:

5.2.1 The Member, or the SAA on the Member's behalf, procured the physical security enhancement solely to provide security to the Member and not to improve the Member's property or increase its value; and

5.2.2 Neither the Member, any relative of the Member, nor employee of the Senate has an ownership or financial interest in the entity providing physical security enhancements.

5.3 Personal security services vouchers: Personal security services vouchers may be paid directly to the personal security provider or may be reimbursed to the Member. These vouchers shall include the following certifications:

5.3.1 The Member, or the SAA on the Member's behalf, entered into a contract with a personal security entity for personal security services for the Member;

5.3.2 The personal security services provided under the contract are being provided only for the protection of the Member or their residence; and

5.3.3 Neither the Member, any relative of the Member, nor employee of the Senate has an ownership or financial interest in the personal security entity providing the services.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on International Human Rights Day, which marks the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

After the atrocities of World War II, world leaders understood that large-scale abuses do not begin with mass violence. They begin when governments cut off basic rights, freedoms, and silence their own people. The declaration was an effort to build a more stable and predictable world by setting clear rules for how governments should treat their citizens.

More than seven decades later, we are again seeing election interference and political repression, attacks on journalists and civil society, war crimes committed with impunity, and a broader disregard for basic human rights. One of the clearest examples is Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To deny Ukrainians the freedom to choose their own future, Russia has bombed hospitals and kindergartens, executed civilians, and abducted Ukrainian children in an attempt to erase Ukrainian culture. And Ukraine is not the only place where the Kremlin uses coercion to control its neighbors and dictate their political direction.

Last year, the Georgian Government took unprecedented steps to silence its citizens and weaken their democratic system. It passed repressive laws. It walked away from Georgia's constitutional promise to join the Euro-Atlantic community. And it cracked down on civil society and imprisoned political opposition, moves that align squarely with Moscow's interests. Leaders in Georgian civil society—including Nino Dolidze, the recipient of the National Democratic Institute's democracy award—have worked at great personal risk to defend those basic rights. Their fight is part of a larger global struggle.

From Eastern Europe to Latin American and Southeast Asia, the pattern is the same: When authoritarian leaders feel threatened, they silence critics, shut down independent groups and dismantle the checks meant to hold them accountable. And the regimes that do this are the same ones that threaten regional stability and our own security, which is why supporting democratic movements and civil society abroad remains squarely in America's interests.

This administration's funding cuts for democracy and election observation programs move us in the wrong direction. And directives telling U.S. personnel to avoid speaking publicly about how elections are run overseas only make it harder to call out abuses when they occur. The United States should not be stepping back; we should be stepping up.

Few leaders understood these stakes more clearly than Madeleine Albright. At her confirmation hearing for Secretary of State, she said, "Democratic