

According to workers at the farm, Ecuadorian soldiers arrived by helicopter on March 3. After reportedly arresting the workers at gunpoint, interrogating and subjecting them to beatings, suffocation, electric shocks, threats of mutilation, water immersion, and mock executions at an undisclosed military facility before releasing them, they returned to the site, poured gasoline on several structures, and burned them to the ground. Villagers said helicopters returned 3 days later, apparently dropping explosives on what remained of the farm, which the soldiers recorded on the video that the Pentagon released.

In addition to releasing the video, the Pentagon claimed credit for carrying out “target action” against the supposed traffickers at the request of the Ecuadorian authorities, although no U.S. troops were directly involved in the operation. Ecuadorian officials said the operation relied on U.S. “intelligence and support” to identify the farm, which they claimed was a camp for as many as 50 members of irregular armed groups.

According to the owner of the farm, he bought it 6 years ago and had a herd of more than 50 cows used for milk and meat. He said the destroyed structures were two wooden shelters, sheds for equipment, a chicken coop, and a place to make cheese. He said, “It’s a lie that 50 people trained here. Where are they going to train? Out in the open? There’s no logic.” He went on, “Everywhere you look there are animals: the cows I milk, the calves, the horses.”

According to an Ecuadorian human rights lawyer, “There isn’t a single public official who has come to verify what happened.”

This violent operation occurred in a remote, dangerous area along the border between Ecuador and Colombia where armed groups are engaged in illicit mining and cocaine trafficking. But the version of events recounted by the villagers and the farm workers is totally at odds with the version promoted by the Ecuadorian military and the U.S. Department of Defense. It has been more than a month and half since the incident, and the Ecuadorian Government has yet to present any credible evidence to dispute the farm workers’ harrowing account. Instead, they have continued to repeat their assertions and vilify the work of human rights organizations. The farm workers and the villagers have also reported acts of harassment and intimidation by the Ecuadorian military against them since the New York Times story came out. This is the same military that is accused of committing at least 43 cases of enforced disappearances in 2024, according to Amnesty International.

There is no evidence that, prior to issuing a press release characterizing the attack as a counter “narco-terrorist” operation, anyone at the Pentagon had visited the site or spoken with any of the Ecuadorian inhabitants. Perhaps the Ecuadorian Gov-

ernment is reluctant to conduct a credible, thorough investigation, fearing the possibility of having to refute the version of its own soldiers and the U.S. Secretary of Defense. But its responsibility is first and foremost to its own citizens, to the truth, and to the law. If the facts described by the owner of the farm are borne out, the operation violated multiple laws, including arbitrary detention, denial of due process, torture, and the destruction of property. And if this was, in fact, an attack based on faulty intelligence that never should have happened, the owner of the farm and the workers who were abused must be compensated and those responsible brought to justice.

REMEMBERING MR. JAMES MCARTHUR ALSOBROOKS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Mr. James McArthur “Mack” Alsbrooks. Mr. Alsbrooks was a beloved husband, father, neighbor, and friend who centered kindness and faith in all that he did.

Mr. Alsbrooks was born on January 24, 1948, in Wadesboro, NC, to Adam Willis Alsbrooks and Sarah Daisy (née Tillman) Alsbrooks. The eldest of three children, he stepped into his role as big brother with ease. He was a product of the District of Columbia Public Schools system, having attended Charles Young Elementary School, Brown Junior High School, and Spingarn High School. He continued to pursue his appetite for knowledge with the help of his teachers, including his music teacher, Roberta Flack.

On December 6, 1969, Mr. Alsbrooks married Patricia Ann Thompson. They raised their incredible daughters, Kimberly Patrice and ANGELA DENEECE in Suitland, Prince George’s County, MD. Mr. Alsbrooks’ daughters were the light of his life, and he sacrificed endlessly to provide them with the opportunity to chase their dreams. He was always their fiercest supporter and was able to stand by his daughter, our colleague, as she was sworn into the U.S. Senate. I saw him beaming with pride that day.

Mr. Alsbrooks applied his deep belief in humanity to every aspect of his life. He cofounded the Alliance of Concerned Men, an organization committed to interrupting cycles of violence and pursuing community healing. Through his church, he participated in a program to counsel, support, and uplift young men. He also served on the Prince George’s County Commission on Fathers, Men, and Boys, where he advocated for policies and programs that empower men across generations.

Mr. Alsbrooks was also a man of profound faith and a lifelong member of the church. He worshipped with the Ebenezer AME Church in Fort Washington, MD, for over four decades.

The outpouring of love from friends, family, and community members since Mr. Alsbrooks’ passing is a testament

to the kind of life he lived, one filled with joy, devotion, and an uncompromising belief in humanity. He will always be remembered for his wit, his empathy, and his love for a good game of pool.

He is survived by his beloved wife Patricia; his daughters Kimberly and ANGELA; his adored granddaughter Alexandra; his sisters Carol and Barbara; his nephew Aaron; his godson Avery; and many dear family members and friends—all of whom will carry his legacy forward.

I invite my fellow Members to join me in offering our sincere condolences to our colleague Senator ALSOBROOKS and to her family.

TRIBUTE TO KEN AYARS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Ken Ayars, an extraordinary public servant, who is retiring from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management after 39 years of service, including 28 years as the chief of the division of agriculture and forest environment.

In an industry where Rhode Island’s small specialty crop growers face tremendous challenges, Ken has been an advocate for growers, helping them stay in business and ensuring that their farmland can remain in production for generations to come. His extraordinary patience and even-keeled demeanor have undoubtedly contributed to his ability to work effectively with a wide range of stakeholders. And after nearly four decades of dedicated service, Ken has left an enduring mark on Rhode Island’s agricultural landscape, both figuratively and literally.

Indeed, by working closely with farmers and producers across the State, Ken has been instrumental in preserving farmland and safeguarding it from development, ensuring that agriculture remains a vital part of Rhode Island’s future. Overseeing the Farmland Preservation Program, Ken helped create a pathway for farmers to maintain ownership of their land while permanently protecting it for agricultural use. His leadership has helped protect thousands of acres and strengthened the long-term viability of farming in the State.

To help farmers sell their produce, Ken helped strengthen Rhode Island’s network of farmers markets and initiated the RI Grown marketing campaign. And under Ken’s leadership, Rhode Island emerged as a national leader in cultivating the next generation of farmers. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, the State achieved the highest percentage of new and beginning farmers in the country, with more than 40 percent of its farmers falling into this category, a testament to his commitment to supporting and sustaining the agricultural community.

As Rhode Island’s chief of agriculture, Ken has guided farmers through tough times, from damaging

storms, to high fuel and fertilizer costs, to a global pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when hunger in Rhode Island jumped by 41 percent in a matter of months and local growers could not market their goods, Ken played a pivotal role in connecting residents with local producers. As supply chain disruptions led many to seek food closer to home, Ken saw the opportunity to build stronger ties between consumers and fresh, locally produced food from local farms and fisheries.

In addition, Ken guided the State through public health challenges affecting the farming industry, including efforts to monitor and respond to mosquito-borne illnesses such as Eastern equine encephalitis, EEE; the West Nile virus; and bird flu.

Ken Ayars' career has been marked by a special dedication. He listened to farmers and responded to their needs with commonsense solutions that benefit the whole community. I join people across Rhode Island in thanking Ken for his work and distinguished service to our State. I wish him and his family all the best as he embarks on his next chapter.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL FELIX A. ABEYTA

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a great American and an exceptional member of the U.S. Space Force, Lt. Col. Felix Abeyta.

A true champion for our Nation and expert communicator, this Colorado native and U.S. Air Force Academy graduate brings over 15 years of distinguished uniformed service. He has consistently demonstrated exemplary leadership and an unparalleled ability to navigate complex legislative landscapes in service to our country and the 119th U.S. Congress. He left an indelible mark as the first guardian dedicated to the U.S. Senate, providing that vital link between Congress and the Space Force as he effectively advocated for critical defense priorities. Throughout his military career, he has demonstrated exceptional and unrivaled excellence in a myriad of positions critical to U.S. defense and national security worldwide.

As a legislative liaison and action officer in the Department of the Air Force's Senate Legislative Liaison Division, Lieutenant Colonel Abeyta expertly advised Department of the Air Force senior leadership, developing strategic opportunities to advance Air and Space Force priorities on Capitol Hill. His leadership facilitated seamless collaboration on behalf of the Department of the Air Force across 64 congressional offices, expertly resolving 103 requests for information. He supported numerous congressional engagements and delegations to showcase Department equities in the United States and abroad. Most notably, his strategic acumen during key hearings on Space Force capabilities was instru-

mental in securing a \$32 billion investment from Congress and forging a stronger relationship between the Department and the Senate. Through his tireless efforts, Lieutenant Colonel Abeyta secured direct engagement between Members of Congress and key decision-makers, including the Secretary of the Air Force, resulting in successful advancements of critical Space Force initiatives. Leveraging his deep expertise in Space Force acquisitions, Lieutenant Colonel Abeyta secured congressional alignment for the future of space-based global satellite communications for 12 service vehicles, degrading adversary jamming capabilities and protecting critical national security objectives.

Finally, as the sole guardian on the Department of the Air Force Senate liaison team, he effectively advocated for Department priorities. Collaborating with U.S. Space Command, he arranged 10 visits to 31 space-based locations for key decision-makers, highlighting capabilities, and the quality-of-life concerns of guardians. His efforts have expanded the U.S. Space Force Caucus by 25 percent on the Hill. Due to his direct involvement, advocacy, and stewardship, Members of Congress were able to make informed decisions and ensured the Department of the Air Force was properly resourced and funded.

After serving in this crucial role and becoming a fixture on Capitol Hill, Lieutenant Colonel Abeyta will move on to become the system program manager for the Space Launch Procurement Branch, Space Systems Command, Los Angeles Air Force Base, CA. Felix and his wife Zantia have instilled a legacy of service for their three children Dylan, Tillman, and Charlotte. They have sacrificed much as a family in service to our Nation. I am thankful for Felix's service and his work with my office and the Senate over the past year on issues of vital importance to the defense of the United States. I salute this American patriot whose selfless service has kept our country safe and strong.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DUSHUN L. SCARBROUGH, SR.

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize an outstanding Arkansan, DuShun L. Scarbrough, Sr., who recently received two distinguished national honors that reflect his unwavering commitment to service, leadership, and community empowerment.

We were tremendously proud to learn Scarbrough had earned the 2026 Beloved Community Civic Leadership Award by The King Center, a nonprofit steward of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy led by Dr. Bernice A. King. This accolade honors individuals whose work reflects a deep commitment to

advancing justice, fostering unity, and serving others in the footsteps of MLK Jr.

Also this year, he became only the second Arkansan to receive the Freedom Flame Award from the organizers of the Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee, an annual event that commemorates the legacy of the Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches. This distinction celebrates leaders who carry forward the enduring spirit of courage, sacrifice, and meaningful social change.

These recognitions are a testament to Scarbrough's lifelong dedication to uplifting others. Raised in Little Rock by his grandmother and aunts, he chose a path of purpose and perseverance, becoming a positive force in his community and an advocate for opportunity and inclusion. He graduated from Philander Smith College and pursued further education before returning to Arkansas, yet has remained steadfast in advancing the ideals championed by Dr. King while ensuring that personal, professional, and civic opportunity remain accessible to all people, regardless of race, creed, color, or background.

Scarbrough's service as the executive director of the Arkansas Martin Luther King Jr. Commission has consistently reflected his belief in this mission and a dedication to uplift and invest in his community, as well as our entire State. His efforts have activated others, encouraged new ideas and inspired the next generation to make a lasting impact. In fact, thanks to his vision and guidance, The Natural State now hosts the largest service day nationwide in honor of the life of MLK Jr.

Scarbrough follows in the footsteps of exceptional Arkansans, including Dr. Maya Angelou, whose legacies are hallmarks of progress and positive leadership that shape countless lives.

DuShun Scarbrough, Sr.'s story is one of resilience, faith, and determination. His message is simple but powerful: work hard, stay focused, and do not be afraid to create new paths where none exist. I commend all his extraordinary achievements and the example he sets. Arkansas is proud of his many contributions, and our Nation is stronger because of his service.●

RECOGNIZING THE ARCHER CENTER

• Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today I rise to honor a program that has helped shape generations of Texans who come to Washington not simply to observe public service, but to participate. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Archer Fellowship Program and the Archer Center in Washington, DC. Founded in 2001 by Congressman Bill Archer and his longtime chief of staff Don Carlson, the Archer Center is "where Texas meets the world" and provides talented students from across the University of Texas System the chance to live, learn, and intern in the Nation's Capital.