

letters they have received from our colleague Senator BENNET, from Governor Hickenlooper of Colorado, who have urged this to be taken seriously, to be reconsidered and appealed. It would be economically devastating for these communities to lose 220 jobs. I certainly hope the administration is paying the serious attention to this matter that it deserves.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arizona.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, we will begin today, and hopefully, with the agreement of my friend from Rhode Island, we will have some amendments, voice votes, and recorded votes today. My colleagues can look forward to it. Also, those who wish to come to the floor to propose amendments, we are still looking at, hopefully, an agreement that the amendments will be closed out by this evening.

Mr. REED. We are fine with that.

#### THE PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I would like to say a few words here about the fact that apparently President Obama is now going to send hundreds more troops to Iraq. "The President plans to deploy hundreds," according to the media reports, "more American troops to western Anbar Province, POLITICO has learned, to step up training for Iraqi troops who'll be charged with retaking the city of Ramadi and other ground lost to ISIL."

However, American troops still will not go into combat with Iraqi units, to help fight ISIL directly or to call for airstrikes. And defense officials continue to worry about Iraqis' end of the bargain—whether Baghdad can send enough recruits to take advantage of a widened American training pipeline. One U.S. training center, at Al Assad Air Base in western Anbar, hasn't had any Iraqi recruits to train for months.

We are going to send 400 more people, maybe, to staff up their headquarters. I don't know, but when we have a situation where 75 percent of the air combat missions over Iraq and Syria return—75 percent of them—without dropping a weapon, it is so reminiscent of another war at another time many years ago where, under then-Secretary of Defense McNamara, this same kind of strategy prevailed.

I would remind my colleagues of the various statements that have been made by President Obama and others.

January 27, 2014: "Obama Likens ISIS to 'J.V. Team.'"

On August 7, 2014, Mr. Obama said that "the United States had no intention of 'being the Iraqi air force.'"

September 10, 2014:

President Obama authorized a major expansion of the campaign against the Islamic State, saying the United States was recruiting a global coalition to "degrade and ultimately destroy" the militants.

Unfortunately, there is still—the President said I believe the day before yesterday that "we do not yet have a complete strategy" for fighting the Islamic State and that thousands of new fighters were replenishing the ranks of the militant group faster than the coalition could remove them from the fight.

In other words, we are losing.

I would remind my colleagues of the news items today. The Wall Street Journal: "U.S. Strategy in Lebanon Stirs Fears."

Critics say Washington's funding cut for a program in Lebanon to develop alternative Shiite political voices to Hezbollah is an effort to appease Iran.

"China military says conducted drills near Taiwan, Philippines."

Chinese warships and aircraft on Wednesday passed through Bashi Channel between Taiwan and the Philippines to hold routine planned exercises in the Western Pacific.

The Hill: "U.S. training base in Iraq hasn't seen a new recruit in weeks."

The U.S. mission in Iraq has stalled at one of the five coalition training sites because the central government has not been sending new recruits, according to defense officials.

There is an interesting one in the Wall Street Journal: "Iraqi City of Mosul Transformed a Year After Islamic State Capture."

I remind my colleagues of the many statements made by American officials as well as Iraqis that they were going to retake the city of Mosul very quickly.

In Islamic State's stronghold of Mosul, the extremist group is working day and night to repair roads, manicure gardens and refurbish hotels. Iraq's second-largest city has never looked so good thanks to strict laws enforced by the Sunni militants. But beneath that veneer, the group metes out deadly punishments to those who don't comply with a long list of prohibitions imposed over the year since it took control of Mosul on June 10, 2014, according to interviews with more than a dozen current and former city . . . officials.

Mosul is still almost fully inhabited—a contrast to cities where Iraqi and coalition forces have pushed the Islamic State out.

Doctors, judges, and professors who defied or questioned Islamic State laws have been executed, sometimes by public stoning or crucifixion. Prisons are filled with people awaiting their sentences from the Islamic court.

"Nearly no one gets out alive," one of the residents said.

Then came the attacks on minorities.

"There are many things we do not consider Islamic at all, like the way Christians were treated," said a female doctor from Mosul who is pious and veiled.

"All of Mosul does not accept what has happened to the Christians," said the

woman, who lives in the northern city of Kirkuk. The group's attack on minorities "was a major mistake that cost them our support."

"Suicide bomber attacks tourist site in Luxor, four Egyptians wounded."

"China military conducts drills near Taiwan, Philippines."

"Al-Qaida militants in Libya attack IS after leader killed."

"China exports repression beyond its borders."

"Foreign Policy: Airstrikes Killing Thousands of Islamic State Fighters, but It Just Recruits More."

"The strength of ISIS continues to grow, so they're getting more in from recruits than they are losing through casualties," said Rick Brennan, a former U.S. Army infantry officer who was a civilian adviser to the U.S. military in Iraq. . . . Brennan, now a senior political scientist at the Rand Corp., said he was basing his opinion on intelligence estimates that have been made public.

So the bragging about killing 10,000 ISIS—they forgot to mention that there are more coming in than they are killing—also reminiscent of the days of the Vietnam war where body counts seemed to be the criteria.

"Islamic State keeps firm grip one year after Mosul's fall."

Weak Iraqi forces no closer to reclaiming strategic city.

The New York Times: "ISIS Stages Attacks in Iraq and Libya, Despite U.S. Airstrikes."

Islamic State militants staged attacks near Baghdad and the Libyan city of Surt on Tuesday, underscoring the group's persistent strength on both fronts despite a monthlong American-led air campaign against it in Syria and Iraq.

The Wall Street Journal: "U.S. Prepares Plan to Send Hundreds More Trainers to Iraq," as I talked about.

The Associated Press: "State Dep't spokesman: Saving Iraq could take 3-5 years."

Naturally, there is no mention of Syria.

By the way, they said that they were developing if not a complete strategy—I would like to know the incomplete part of it. I would like to know what strategy there is of any kind.

The Wall Street Journal: "Iraqi City of Mosul Transformed a Year After Islamic State Capture."

I mentioned before that ISIS stage attacks in Iraq and Libya despite U.S. airstrikes.

It goes on and on. Meanwhile, the President of the United States will, according to the media reports, announce today that we will send 400 or so more to Iraq, none of which is accompanied by a strategy, none of which is accompanied by forward air controllers, so we will continue to see 75 percent of the combat missions flown return to base without having discharged their weapons since we have no one on the ground to identify targets. This is incrementalism at its best or worst, depending on how you would describe it.

Today, I hope we will be able to take some additional amendments. We have a managers' package getting prepared,

and I believe Senator REED and I are moving forward with some amendments we can have debated and also voted on today.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1735, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1735) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 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.

Pending:

McCain amendment No. 1463, in the nature of a substitute.

McCain amendment No. 1456 (to amendment No. 1463), to require additional information supporting long-range plans for construction of naval vessels.

Cornyn amendment No. 1486 (to amendment No. 1463), to require reporting on energy security issues involving Europe and the Russian Federation, and to express the sense of Congress regarding ways the United States could help vulnerable allies and partners with energy security.

Vitter amendment No. 1473 (to amendment No. 1463), to limit the retirement of Army combat units.

Markey amendment No. 1645 (to amendment No. 1463), to express the sense of Congress that exports of crude oil to United States allies and partners should not be determined to be consistent with the national interest if those exports would increase energy prices in the United States for American consumers or businesses or increase the reliance of the United States on imported oil.

Reed (for Blumenthal) amendment No. 1564 (to amendment No. 1463), to increase civil penalties for violations of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

McCain (for Paul) modified amendment No. 1543 (to amendment No. 1463), to strengthen employee cost savings suggestions programs within the Federal Government.

Reed (for Durbin) modified amendment No. 1559 (to amendment No. 1463), to prohibit the award of Department of Defense contracts to inverted domestic corporations.

McCain (for Burr) amendment No. 1569 (to amendment No. 1463), to ensure criminal background checks of employees of the military child care system and providers of child care services and youth program services for military dependents.

Feinstein (for McCain) amendment No. 1889 (to amendment No. 1463), to reaffirm the prohibition on torture.

Fischer/Booker amendment No. 1825 (to amendment No. 1463), to authorize appropriations for national security aspects of the Merchant Marine for fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

Burr/McCain amendment No. 1921 (to amendment No. 1569), to improve cybersecurity in the United States through enhanced sharing of information about cybersecurity threats.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. 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.

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

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I was first going to offer an amendment, but both the chairman and ranking member of the committee suggested that I wait until after they have had a chance to review some of the technical details. So I will speak on an amendment that I will in all probability offer at a later time.

My amendment really goes to how we make sure we help our troops with the many stresses that are in their lives. My goal is to add money to funding our commissaries. This amendment, which I will offer at a later time, restores \$322 million in cuts to commissaries proposed by the Department of Defense. It would authorize \$1.4 billion in funding—the same level that is in the House National Defense Authorization Act and in the House Defense appropriations bill. It offsets the \$322 million for commissaries by reducing the Pentagon's budget in failed policies to buy spare parts. They have a lot of waste there, and we think we can find the \$322 million we need there, and that is the technical issue we need to work, also known as the offset. But what is not technical is the fact that we have to make sure our commissaries function at their current level.

Commissaries represent one of the most significant and lasting benefits for military members and their families. Commissaries have been around since 1826, giving military families the ability to shop at a network of stores. The commissary system is simple. If you are Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard, or a retired member of the family, you have access to 246 commissaries worldwide. They are particularly important to many of our troops overseas, and they give military families affordable access to healthy foods.

The benefits of commissaries are significant. They feed those people who are actually members of our military. They help military families stretch their budgets, and they also help provide jobs to family members in the military who work in those commissaries.

Our distinguished colleagues on the authorizing committee, Senator MCCAIN and Senator JACK REED, are themselves military men. Senator MCCAIN is a graduate of the Naval Academy and Senator JACK REED graduated from West Point. They know that one of the big expenditures right now for our military is rising health costs. The military itself is looking at how to make sure they keep our troops healthy not only while they are doing their job but also how to keep them

healthy so that when they move on, they will be in excellent shape. The commissaries do those kinds of things. They provide what grocery stores provide—fresh fruits and vegetables. They provide healthy foods.

Also, for example, my own commissary at Fort Meade, which is part of the Healthy Base Initiative, has shown people how to stretch their dollar more so they can get more for their family budget and also has actual recommendations on how to add nutrition—save money and add nutrition. If we want to bend the health care cost curve, while we are looking at important medical research, research shows that good food leads to good health.

The other thing is this: Military members get a significant savings from commissaries. The average savings is about 30 percent on a grocery bill. For a family of four, that comes to over \$4,000 a year. Everyone knows how much military families are stretched, and for our men and women who are enlisted, this is a really big deal. We need to make this available for them.

What many people don't realize is that the commissaries not only create jobs, but 60 percent of commissary workers are spouses of men who serve in the military. About 100,000 jobs are supported through commissaries. The other thing the DOD wants to do is cut their hours. Well, if they cut their hours, that does cut jobs, but it also cuts opportunity.

When you are in the military, you work around the clock. You are not on the clock; you work around the clock. So if you are a military police officer, you could be getting off of duty late at night. If you are someone who repairs our helicopters or airplanes, you could be getting off at night.

The commissary at Fort Meade serves agencies such as the National Security Agency. They essentially work a 36-hour day. They work around the clock, 24 hours a day. Our commissary isn't open 24 hours a day, but I can tell you it can't be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and still meet the needs of our military workforce.

The Department of Defense wants to make the commissaries more self-sustaining, and we don't argue with that. We can always find efficiencies and look at new ways to do things. But don't cut \$322 million and further cut it close to \$1 billion over the next 4 years.

What we want to do is make sure our military families have what they need. First of all, we want them to have good food. We want them to be able to go to these commissaries at hours that work for military families. We also want to look at the long-range effects of bending the health care curve.

I am going to come back to the commissary at Fort Meade. I am very proud of the fact that Fort Meade is what we call a compassionate post. That means if you are in the U.S. Army and you have a special needs child, one of the highly desirable places to be based is at Fort Meade. Why? Because Anne Arundel County has one of