

Federal resources for things like schools, hospitals, and housing. It has the potential to ensure that all Americans get the services and political representation to which they are entitled, or it could further skew the playing field in favor of the already privileged. It all depends on whether minority communities are fully counted.

Historically, they have not been. That is why I am asking each and every American to please, please participate in the census this year. Dr. King taught us that every human being is equal, that all of us deserve to live with dignity and respect. He shined a light on the forgotten and the oppressed and demanded better for them. Help to honor his memory by making sure that no one goes uncounted. Carry on his legacy by demanding a government that serves and protects each of its citizens equally. In this way, we can continue building the world that Dr. King envisioned.

(At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY AND AFRICA

● Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, as chairman of the Armed Services Committee, my top priority is ensuring the effective implementation of the National Defense Strategy. I rise today to speak about the importance of Africa as a key front in our global efforts under the NDS to compete with China and Russia, defend U.S. national security, and combat radical terrorist groups like al-Qaida and ISIS. The NDS says competition with China and Russia is “the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security.” This is where DOD is rightly focusing its attention. But China’s and Russia’s growing influence isn’t restricted to Europe and the Indo-Pacific. Recent actions by China and Russia clearly demonstrate that both countries view Africa as a critical battlefield to fulfill their global ambitions and challenge U.S. interests.

Over the past 20 years, I have conducted 164 African country visits. I can tell you it is no coincidence that China established its first overseas military base in Djibouti—strategically located on one of the most important maritime transit routes in the world. I visited Djibouti last February and saw firsthand China’s military base and their encroachment on the Port of Djibouti. Elsewhere, China is using cash and debt to trap countries and force them to put their infrastructure and potentially their very sovereignty on sale. For example, 90 percent of African exports depend on ports and China is funding, building, or operating at least 46 port projects in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to giving China a potential stranglehold on African prosperity, it also provides China access to critical maritime routes and chokepoints.

At the same time, Russia is using its armed forces, mercenaries, and the sale

of Russian arms to buy influence, exploit Africa’s natural resources, and to prop up leaders sympathetic to Russian interests and hostile to those of the West. And while the NDS states that competition with China and Russia should be DOD’s top priority, it makes clear that we cannot afford to lose sight of the continuing threat posed by radical terrorist groups like al-Qaida and ISIS.

Africa has been and must remain a key theater for our counterterrorism efforts. Today, more than a dozen terrorist groups with ties to al-Qaida and ISIS, like Al-Shabab, are operating across the continent. Many of these groups have ambition to attack Americans and our partners, as we saw last week when Al-Shabab militants in Kenya killed a U.S. servicemember and two DOD contractors. Without pressure the threat these groups pose to the United States will grow unchecked. And this isn’t a recent development—I have seen this come up time and time again on my visits to the continent. It is why I pushed the DOD for years to stand up an Africa command. People forget that we didn’t always have a dedicated military presence in Africa, despite its strategic importance. It was managed through three separate combatant commands. I worked with DOD and then-President Bush to change that, and in 2008 we officially stood up United States Africa Command AFRICOM.

Despite the breadth of security challenges we face on the African continent every day, AFRICOM has consistently suffered resource shortfalls. On any given day, there are about 7,000 DOD personnel serving in Africa. Africa is home to 1.3 billion people and is larger geographically than China, India, the United States, and most of Europe—combined. In light of these significant resource and geographical challenges, the men and women of AFRICOM perform critical missions every day to check Chinese and Russian influence, combat terrorism, and strengthen the capabilities of our partners. AFRICOM provides an enormous value to the Nation for an extremely modest level of investment—the very definition of “economy of force.” Despite this, I understand that DOD is reviewing our military presence in Africa and is considering significant cuts.

Given what is at stake for both U.S. national security and effective implementation of NDS, we must have a meaningful, albeit limited, U.S. presence in Africa. Any drawdown of our troops would be shortsighted, could cripple AFRICOM’s ability to execute its mission and, as a result, would harm national security. Rather than talking about drawing down troops in Africa, we should finally assign forces to AFRICOM on an enduring basis—including an SFAB—in order to provide the command with predictable resourcing so it can be most effective in defending U.S. national security.

I urge the Secretary of Defense to keep this in mind as he makes deci-

sions on the future of our presence and role in Africa.●

REMEMBERING CHRIS ALLEN

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Chris Allen, who worked as my senior economic policy adviser. It is fitting that I do so on the Senate floor because Chris Allen would be the first one to tell you he loved his job.

This statement was delivered so frequently and with such sincerity that one was compelled to look inward and remind one’s self of what a privilege it is to work in the U.S. Senate on behalf of the American people.

Chris Allen was a student of history and a lover of politics. Ladies and gentlemen, Chris Allen loved tax policy. If that doesn’t tell you what a special person he was, I don’t know what does.

Chris’s attitude about his job extended to his coworkers. He loved his coworkers. When he was on my staff, Chris was always willing to help junior staff, senior staff, or interns. It didn’t matter—he had time for you. He rolled up his sleeves and pitched in. He gave you advice. He truly cared.

When it came time for my 2014 campaign, Chris spent his vacation days with me in Kansas—knocking on doors, walking in parades, and being a force of positive energy no matter what we faced. Normally these are grueling tasks but not for Chris. He had fun. He loved it.

As a matter of fact, posted on the wall of our little Hart kitchen, we have a selfie on election night of my crew at the victory party. The picture is entitled “This is what victory looks like.” And right smack-dab in the middle is one smiling Chris Allen. Now, when I am heating up my coffee, I look at Chris in the picture, and I can feel his joy as he is surrounded by our family of staffers.

Elections weren’t his only love. Chris Allen loved a cold beer. He loved a natty jacket. He loved loud pants. Sometimes he loved wearing them together. He loved his lacrosse. He loved his Baltimore neighborhood. He loved all things English and French. He loved researching his ancestry.

Chris Allen loved his parents, his in-laws, his brothers, his nieces and nephews, but nothing compared to his love for Lynda, Lucie, and Sophie. He was not just a proud dad who boasted of his daughters’ accomplishments big and small; he was better. He was a father who took delight in the things his daughters said and did, big and small. They were cherished. May they understand today and always that we loved Chris, and he loved them.

I always looked forward to my briefings with Chris. For one, he got my jokes. He understood my references to radio and television shows and personalities that my other staff would have to research and look up. But he was also understanding of the history of the issues, even those not in his portfolio.