

the Chinese Communist Party is acting aggressively. It has essentially invaded India and killed 20 Indian soldiers. In the South China Sea, it has attacked or otherwise threatened vessels from Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines and has repeatedly and increasingly encroached on Taiwanese and Japanese airspace.

But in Hong Kong, the security law proves most clearly that the Chinese Communist Party will not abide by its commitments, whether to its own people or to foreign nations. Through actions this week, Beijing has effectively torn up the joint declaration it made with Britain to govern the peaceful handover of Hong Kong just as cynically as China has broken its commitments to the United States, to the World Trade Organization, to the World Health Organization, and others.

And, of course, this law exposes once again the hideous nature of communism, which is so paranoid and insecure it can't tolerate even a tiny outpost of freedom within its borders. No wonder. Freedom is an attractive, precious, and contagious thing. The way of life enjoyed by the citizens of Hong Kong could give the wrong ideas to the 1 billion Chinese yearning for freedom elsewhere in the country. Nothing could be more threatening to the Chinese Communist Party's rule.

Now the party has begun the takeover that Hongkongers have long feared. Those of us with freedom to speak and act on their behalf must do so now, as one of the great citadels of Asia slips into the totalitarian darkness. While dark days may lie ahead for Hong Kong, one day the future will return the sunny highlands of freedom to that small citadel.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

F-22 RAPTORS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to talk about one of the favorite things I get to do all week, and that is to talk about some Alaskans who are making a difference. We call this our "Alaskan of the Week."

It means that I get to speak about my State, usually an individual, maybe a couple of people, but every now and then I like to mix things up and keep people on high alert because the people I am going to talk about in Alaska are the ultimate people—Americans—on high alert. As opposed to recognizing one or two, I am going to recognize a bunch of Alaskans, an impressive group, who work day and night, not only to keep Alaska safe but to keep America safe. They will be doing it this weekend, the Fourth of July—24/7, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, always on high alert.

As we are heading into the Fourth of July weekend, Russia is once again in the news, and we have been debating the National Defense Authorization Act on the Senate floor, a very critical bill that I am fully supportive of,

which funds our military and pay raises for our troops. I thought it would be very appropriate to highlight the hundreds of men and women in my State who stand watch and patrol the northern skies of Alaska and America to protect our Nation. They are unsung heroes. You don't hear a lot about them in the news, but we certainly appreciate them. I think all Senators and all Americans do, which is why I want to talk about them today.

They are our brave servicemembers who fly and maintain our F-22 Raptors—this amazing stealth fighter; our E-3 Sentrys, which are also known as AWACS, which are like the quarterback in the sky of aircraft; our Alaska Guard KC-135 Stratotankers; our brave members of the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center, who operate HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters and H-130 Hercules aircraft, should we need a search and rescue mission; and our Active-Duty members and guardsmen, who maintain, monitor, and track threats from other countries for our country, particularly threats coming from Russia. These brave men and women—hundreds of them—are keeping guard day and night over the northern skies of America.

When the Russians fly their Bear bombers and fighter jets into or near American air space, these intrepid Americans are on duty to ensure that our F-22s are there to intercept and greet the Russian pilots and aircraft who threaten to move into our air defense identification zone, or ADIZ, as we call it. They are there waiting and intercepting Russian bombers. These airmen keep us all safe. As I mentioned, they are all worthy of the great title Alaskans of the Week.

Before I get into exactly what these men and women do to guard our Nation—and they do it round the clock; they are doing it right now, by the way, and will be doing it the Fourth of July, by the way—I would like to talk a little about Russia and Alaska and our close geography. I want to give a little geography lesson. There are actual places in Alaska where you really can see Russia from your house.

Russia and Alaska are divided by the Bering Strait, which is about 55 miles at its narrowest point. In the middle of the Bering Strait sit two islands, Big Diomedes, which is actually Russian territory, and Little Diomedes, which is part of Alaska, part of America. They are less than 2½ miles apart from each other, nearly touching. In the words of a New York Times reporter, it is the place where "the two great continental powers reach across the map and all but touch, like the outstretched figures in Michelangelo's 'The Creation of Adam.'" It is a little dramatic, but you get the point—Little Diomedes and Big Diomedes.

On a clear day, you can see Russia from St. Lawrence Island, which is also Alaskan, and even from our mainland, in Wales, AK. During the Cold War, the Alaska-Siberia frontier was called not

the Iron Curtain but the "Ice Curtain," which we needed to stay closed.

Much preparation was put into keeping Russia from invading or infiltrating the United States from its northern flank—from the Arctic, from Alaska. In the early Cold War years, our government recruited and trained fishermen, bush pilots, trappers, and many, many in our patriotic Native Alaskan communities throughout the State to stand guard for America during the Cold War. And so many Alaskans did this for decades. It was their patriotic duty guarding the northern flank of our great Nation.

There were the great Eskimo scouts of the Alaska National Guard, who knew the land better than anyone else could. They were so patriotic with their love of this Nation.

It is still unclear how many Russians were able to get to our lands, but stories do abound in Alaska about strangers speaking Russian showing up in communities unannounced—five men emerging from the water in wet suits over olive-drab uniforms, the color of the uniform of Soviet Special Forces. Go to any one of our Native Alaska communities, and today, you will still hear such stories.

Something that is very clear and very well known is that between 1961 and 1991, the U.S. military intercepted thousands of long-range Soviet bombers and reconnaissance aircraft when they were moving into American airspace. We used our aircraft back then, the F-102s, F-106s, and later, F-4s, F-15s. Then, like now, our aircraft were superior to the Russians and that was certainly one of the reasons we won the Cold War.

This is still going on today. This is still a threat. The Russians continue to flex their military muscle, from Ukraine to Siberia, and they have added new Blackjack bombers to the mix and their SU-35 fighters. They still come close to American airspace via flights near Alaska. That is where our F-22 pilots and those who support them come in.

Just in the last 6 months, our Alaskan F-22s, shown here, have intercepted 10 Russian Bear bombers. We are starting to see Cold War levels of intrusions into American airspace and, of course, our patriotic men and women—young men and women, by the way—flying these great aircraft, going after these big Bear bombers. There were 10 missions already, and it is just July 2. What are they up to?

Air Force Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, who commands NORAD and these forces, ultimately, and U.S. Northern Command, linked the uptick in Russian military flights off Alaska's coast to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and Russia's testing of our military readiness. They are testing us, but we are ready for them.

In essence, that is what we have been doing all week—debating and getting ready to vote on final passage of the

National Defense Authorization Act, which is all about our military's readiness. Again, in Alaska—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year—our brave men and women are guarding the northern flank of America.

This is how Lt. Col. Dave Deptula, commander of the 525th Fighter Squadron—this F-22 squadron, the “Bulldogs”—described it:

The Russians will fly their bombers and fighters across the Bering Strait and they will test our ADIZ [Air Defense Identification Zone] airspace—they will try to see if they can come into our airspace. And if they were going to go into it, we would be there every time to say, respectfully, “Hello. We’re here and we’re flying with live munitions.”

He said the goal is to make sure the Russians know that they are there to protect our Nation and try to deescalate.

By the way, Colonel Deptula is my former Air Force fellow and a great Air Force leader, just like his dad.

As an aside, pilots in the military have what are called “call signs,” which are essentially their pilot nicknames. As a marine, I know many pilots by their call signs. Lieutenant Colonel Deptula’s call sign is “Ghost.” Maybe that is because he is an F-22 stealth fighter pilot, able to sneak up on Bear bombers like this without being seen and even heard. But I have also heard that maybe it is because when it is time to pay the tab at a bar, he doesn’t seem to be around. Just kidding there, Colonel Deptula, Ghost. I can’t think of a better call sign for an F-22 stealth fighter pilot in Alaska, and we are very, very proud of Ghost in the Sullivan Senate office.

Here is how it works. Here is what these brave young men and women in the U.S. Air Force do to protect our Nation. We have 15 long-range radar sites across the great State of Alaska, which are constantly feeding information to the 176th Air Defense Squadron, which analyze that information.

By the way, I have the honor and pleasure next week of hosting the Secretary of the Air Force in Alaska. She will be able to see our great military members, and we will go out and actually see some of these radar sites.

When our military note troublesome activity, they send out a bone-rattling alarm—what is called the KLAXON—to the Combat Alert Cell. This is a group of pilots and maintainers who are always ready. They are like firemen. They literally have a pole where they scramble down to get to their aircraft—what they call a “hot cocked” and armed F-22 at the ready.

As these pilots literally race to their jets, so, too, does the aircrew of the AWACs—the long-range eyes and ears for the F-22. They launch very quickly. This is taking place at JBER in Anchorage. Simultaneously, at Eielson Air Force Base, about 350 miles north of Anchorage, the 168th Air Refueling Squadron, a unit of the Alaska Air National Guard, launch the KC-135 tankers to meet the F-22s as they are going

to intercept the Russians and to top off the 600-gallon F-22 fuel tanks when they are in the air and then refuel them on the way back. This is all part of one big mission. That is what they are doing.

All told, there are hundreds of Alaskans in the air and on the ground involved in operations like this every single time it happens.

As I mentioned, it is happening a lot—twice a month in the last half year.

Patriotic young men and women are always prepared to defend our country in the sky—24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

One thing I want to do for this “Alaskan of the Week” is remind Americans when they are celebrating the Fourth of July—which is a great thing to do—to remember that these dedicated warriors will be on guard protecting our Nation. When everybody is barbecuing, celebrating America, think about what they are doing.

If you have seen any video of the F-22s flying, it is impressive, but we also have to remember there are real pilots in those planes. Look how close they are in this mission. It can be very dangerous.

Think of this to get a sense of how this all works. It is the middle of the night and the klaxon goes off. It is winter in Alaska. It is dark and 20 below zero. A pilot hustles to her airplane—yes, “her.” We have F-22 female pilots. One is call sign Contra. We were discussing recently in my office about what a great job she does. She gets in the aircraft and flies nearly 600 miles sometimes—certainly, faster than the speed of sound—to reach the rough Bering Sea to intercept a Russian Bear bomber like this in the middle of the night. She probably had to refuel on the way there.

Sometimes Russian pilots can get aggressive. According to Ghost, we do not respond aggressively in turn. We are respectful. We are tough. We are professional. The Russians know it, and the Russians know that they are up against the best Air Force in the world—armed and ready. So the Russians usually behave.

But this can be a stressful mission. As I mentioned, it has happened 10 times already in the last 6 months. It is so critical for our Nation. So many young Alaskans are involved in this. Our men and women in the military represent the very best of this country—brave, strong, committed, devoted to our country, devoted to democracy, devoted to the Republic.

That is why we have been working on this all week. When we come back from our Fourth of July work period, we will continue to work on and pass the National Defense Authorization Act for them.

On this Fourth of July holiday, as I mentioned, I hope we can take the time to thank them and to remember those who have served before. Know that when you are spending time with

friends and family this holiday, dozens of airmen in Alaska are on alert and ready to go do this mission in a moment’s notice.

We have to remember also that the freedoms we are celebrating this weekend have been secured at a price. There is no Independence Day without the U.S. military and our courageous veterans, past and present.

Yet it is not just about protecting our Nation. Think about this: American servicemembers have done more to liberate men and women across the globe from tyranny and oppression—literally, hundreds of millions of people—than probably more than any other force in human history. That includes those who are currently serving. Think about that when you are celebrating the Fourth of July. Can any other country say that? Think about the other big countries in the world—China, Russia, Germany. Have they been forces to have liberated hundreds of millions of people? The fact is, they are the kinds of countries that have tried to dominate hundreds of millions. As my friend from Arkansas just mentioned, China is doing it again, as we speak, in Hong Kong.

So, yes, our Nation has challenges right now—no doubt about it. Yet I think the vast majority of us recognizes the obvious fact that we are the greatest country in the world and have stood for liberating not just Americans but hundreds of millions around the world. My view is that we are the greatest country in the history of the world. One reason is due to those who stand guard to protect us and our freedoms and our liberty.

So a big thank-you to those who fly and maintain our F-22 Raptors—our AWACs—our Alaska National Guard KC-135s; our HH-60s; our HC-130s; and all of the Active-Duty members and guardsmen who on the Fourth of July, which we are going to celebrate in a couple of days, will be ready to go do this mission at a moment’s notice and be ready to protect us.

I will be up on the Yukon River, in Alaska, with my wife and daughters, as we always are, to celebrate not only America’s birthday but my wife’s, and we will be toasting the brave young men and women who are doing this for our country. I encourage the rest of my fellow Americans to do the same.

To the Raptor pilots and maintainers and everybody who supports them, thanks for what you are doing. Most importantly, congratulations on being our Alaskans of the Week.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, it is my honor to be here today to see a marine Presiding Officer and a marine making a speech.

We are grateful for Senator SULLIVAN’s service to our country and his service in the Senate as a diligent, patriotic, hard-working, good-humored Member of the Senate. I am glad I had a chance to hear his remarks.

I was trying to think of where in the world to go on my 50th birthday, and I went to Anchorage, AK, to go fishing at Halibut Cove. I had a wonderful time and have a great memory. So the Senator represents a really terrific State.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I thank my good friend from Tennessee for those kind comments.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, just 3½ months ago, a sneaky, dangerous virus turned our country and the world upside down. It is hard to believe that it was just 3½ months ago—mid-March—that we were headed toward March Madness in basketball; that our economy was roaring; that unemployment rates for about every category were as low as they had been in a long, long time. America felt really good about itself. By the time we would have gotten to the Fourth of July, it would have been a terrific celebration except that here came this dangerous, sneaky virus that turned our lives and those in countries all over the world upside down.

I want to comment this afternoon on some aspects of where we are in terms of COVID-19 based upon five congressional hearings this month that I have either chaired or attended in our HELP Committee or the one I participated in today in Senator BLUNT's Appropriations Committee on Health. Of course, Senator MURRAY, of Washington State, is the ranking Democrat on both of those committees.

Of course, much of the talk is about vaccines. Even though we have appropriated \$3 trillion and another astonishing \$3 trillion in credit, that is not going to really solve the problem. The only cure for this disease, this virus, will ultimately be through testing, treatments, and vaccines. It is appropriate that we talk about vaccines because our country is moving more rapidly than it ever has in producing a safe and effective vaccine for a new virus.

As Dr. Francis Collins—the head of the National Institutes of Health—told our subcommittee this morning, it usually takes, historically, 5 to 10 years to create a vaccine. Here, the goal of the administration's warped speed effort to create a vaccine is to have 300 million doses ready by the first of this coming year—in other words, 6 months from now. That is its aspirational goal. The administration is not sure it will get there, but you don't get anywhere if you don't set high goals. We know that as a country. So it has set an enormously ambitious goal.

We are taking steps that are like none we have ever taken before, such as Congress has appropriated money, has approved, and is starting to build a manufacturing plant for a vaccine before we know that it works. Now, we don't do that before we know that it is safe, but we will do it before we know that it works. We can be sure that, in some cases, we are going to lose that money, but it is better to cut 6 months

or a year off of the amount of time before the vaccine comes and take that financial risk. I think all of us would agree with that.

Instead of talking about vaccines today, which are next year's solution, let me talk about two aspects of COVID-19 that are this year's solution—in fact, that are this fall's solution. One is diagnostic tests to find out whether you have the disease or not, and one is treatments, which is medicine that can be given to you to reduce the chance that you might be seriously ill or will even die.

That is appropriate in the first place because, in not very many weeks, America will be headed back to school and to college. In Metro Nashville, TN, public school begins on August 4. All across the country, most colleges and schools will be back in business by Labor Day. There were 75 million students who were casualties of COVID-19. They were sent home from school or college in mid-March—100,000 public schools, 35,000 private schools, and 6,000 colleges. Graduations were canceled. Sports championships and once-in-a-lifetime events were canceled.

In our country today, two-thirds of married parents with children work outside the home, and most single parents work outside the home. Suddenly, their children were home. Teachers were not really prepared for such wholesale remote teaching, and parents were not prepared for homeschooling. So ever since mid-March, students have been in limbo.

We are looking forward to doing whatever we can to help make sure that those 75 million students in schools and colleges can go back to school and college this fall and go back safely. That is the importance of tests and treatments. That is the first.

Now, there is another one, and it is not trivial. This is a sports-hungry country. We love our sports, and everybody has a different sport one likes. The question I asked Dr. Collins this morning was: Are we going to have enough COVID-19 tests so we might be able to watch some football this fall or some basketball this winter? I had read that the National Hockey League was going to test every player every day in the National Hockey League.

It is not recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is not standard for there to be widespread testing at schools and colleges, even though the president of Brown University told our committee she would like to test all students on their way back to Brown.

The fact is, if we are going to be able to go back to school, back to college, back to work, out to eat, maybe even watch a sports game, maybe even, in some cases, attend a sports game, we are going to need a lot more quick, reliable tests. Let me talk about those, just for a moment, in terms of going back to school and going out to eat and, perhaps, being able to watch a little football this fall.

Admiral Giroir testified this month before our committee that our country has done 30 million tests—more than any other country. We are doing that at about the rate of 500,000 tests a day, and he says that we will have four to five times that many in September.

Now, I hear about problems in this place or in that place about people not getting tests or that it takes too long for the results to come back from the labs. The fact is, that what is going on now is every State in the country is developing a plan for July through December on how many tests States like Indiana, Tennessee, and Alaska might need in working with the Federal Government, and the Federal Government has been supplying Tennessee with what Tennessee needs.

In our State, for example, which is 1 of the States that is in the top 10 of having frequent testing, the Governor has said: If you want a test, you can have a test. Go down to your public health department, and you will get one for free. Now, whether they will be able to continue that, we will see, but that is what we are doing today.

Despite that, when 75 million students try to go back to school and college, I imagine principals and administrators will want to test teachers frequently, older people frequently, and everybody in some classes if one student gets sick, maybe everybody in an elementary school if several students get sick, and maybe the parents and grandparents of the children if the children bring home the disease. So we are going to need a lot more tests.

This is why Senator BLUNT and I and others worked together in the last legislation to support what we called the shark tank at the National Institutes of Health. This was an unprecedented effort at the National Institutes of Health, led by Dr. Francis Collins, who led the Human Genome Project and is one of the most distinguished scientists in our country.

This is a project to see if we can find a new way to create tens of millions of diagnostic tests that are what they call point-of-care tests. That means you can take them instantly; that you can get a result within an hour or so; and that they are inexpensive and reliable. You don't have to ship them off. You would probably do this with saliva. So you might put a lollipop in your mouth and let that saliva on the lollipop indicate, one way or another, whether you have a positive or a negative result.

Dr. Collins' goal—and he said this is a very aspirational goal—is to be able to produce a million of those tests a day by Labor Day. This would change our lives in many numbers of ways. This would mean that Brown's president could surely test all students, not just once when they go back but more often. It would mean many sports teams could test every player every day if that is what it required.

It would mean that we would probably have more tests than we would need.