

Nighthawks, are preparing to depart for the Republic of Korea. Their 4-month deployment is part of an ongoing measure to maintain a credible deterrent posture and presence in the region and demonstrates the continued U.S. commitment towards fulfilling security responsibilities throughout the Western Pacific.

The F-117A, and the personnel that fly and maintain them, continue to be vital to our national security strategy. This is why I am so pleased the Senate Armed Services Committee included my bill to restrict retirement of any Nighthawks in fiscal year 2006 in the committee passed bill.

We must maintain the ability to deliver precision munitions onto time sensitive, high value targets, wherever and whenever the need arises. And I am so proud of the men and women from New Mexico that take on this very dangerous but important mission in service to their country. They are all superstars that deserve the heartfelt appreciation of a grateful Nation.

AFRO-LATINOS

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today to bring attention to the situation of Afro-Latinos throughout Latin America, in the hopes that we can encourage more action on this issue. From Colombia to Brazil to the Dominican Republic to Ecuador, persons of African descent continue to experience racial discrimination and remain among the poorest and most marginalized groups in the entire region. While recent positive steps have been taken in some areas—for example, giving land titles to Afro-Colombians and passing explicit anti-discrimination legislation in Brazil—much work still needs to be done to ensure that this is the beginning of an ongoing process of reform, not the end.

In places where civil conflict has taken hold, Afro-Latinos are much more likely to become victims of violence or refugees in their own countries. In many areas, Afro-Latinos are also subject to aggression by local police forces at far greater rates than those perceived to be white. Access to health services is another serious concern, and recent studies have shown that Afro-Latino communities are at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

In the last Congress, there was not one mention in the Senate of the millions of Afro-Latinos who continue to experience this widespread discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization. Now is the time for more action on this issue, not less. Emerging civil society groups are growing stronger throughout many countries in Latin America, and this growth should be encouraged as it presents important opportunities for partnerships and collaboration. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate and House on this critical concern in the coming months, and I believe that together we can and will make a difference.

REACH OUT AND READ

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I rise in support of the Reach Out and Read program. Reach Out and Read is a program that promotes early literacy by educating doctors and parents about the importance of reading aloud. Reach Out and Read facilitates reading by giving books to children at pediatric check-ups from six months to five years of age, with a special focus on children growing up in poverty. Children who are exposed to reading in their first years of life learn to love books at an early age—a love that often stays with them throughout their teenage and adult lives. They are also more likely to escape the many problems associated with illiteracy and reading difficulty, including school absenteeism and dropout, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy.

Reach Out and Read is active in more than 2,300 hospitals and health care centers in 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Two million children participate annually and 3.2 million new, developmentally appropriate books are given to family members.

There are 123 Reach Out and Read clinical locations in my State of Massachusetts. More than 116,000 children participate in Reach Out and Read and more than 200,000 books are distributed annually.

Reach Out and Read is unique. Funded both by both the Federal Government and private donations, it is a program with documented results. In 1998, the National Research Council released the much-acclaimed report, "Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children" which specifically cites Reach Out and Read as a program that effectively encourages young children to read. It is supported by the Department of Pediatrics at the Boston University School of Medicine and is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. We should all continue to support this very special program.

PONTIFICAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, TO THE WESTERN DIOCESE

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to recognize the Pontifical Visit of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, to the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America during the month of June 2005. The Catholicos will visit the Western Diocese, headquartered in Burbank in my home State of California and travel around California from June 1 through 20. As the 132nd Catholicos of all Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II is spiritual leader to more than 7 million Armenian Apostolic Christians worldwide. I would also like to recognize the Western Diocese Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, for his

good works on behalf of Armenian-Americans in California and the Western U.S.

This momentous occasion marks the second Pontifical visit of the Catholicos to the Western Diocese. The visit has been titled "The Renaissance of Faith" because it marks a source of spiritual inspiration and reawakening for Christian Armenians, whose faith is 1700 years old.

The Diocese of the Armenian Church, established 107 years ago in Worcester, MA, originally served Armenian churches in the United States and Canada. In 1927, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America was established by a directive from the Mother See. The establishment of the Western Diocese was an historic occasion, which marked the growth of a strong Armenian community in California and the Western United States.

The Western Diocese was originally headquartered in Fresno. In 1957, the headquarters were moved to Los Angeles. In 1994, the headquarters were damaged by the Northridge Earthquake. Later that year, the Diocesan Assembly decided to purchase a new Diocesan Headquarters. In 1997, the Western Diocese officially moved into a multipurpose complex located in Burbank, CA, which will be the future site of the Mother Cathedral. This Pontifical visit is even more special because the Catholicos will be there in June to bless the foundation stones at the groundbreaking of the new Mother Cathedral.

The visit is also appropriately timed to coincide with two important anniversaries—the 90th Anniversary of the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and the 1600th Anniversary of the creation of the Armenian alphabet. Earlier this year, I joined my Armenian friends in commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, which was the first genocide of the 20th century.

The Armenian alphabet, along with the Armenian language, has contributed immensely to the vibrant continuity of Armenian culture. The Catholicos' visit will highlight these two anniversaries and further empower Armenians in the Western Diocese to continue their long-fought efforts for justice.

I am honored to recognize this historic and joyous visit, which will strengthen ties between Armenia and Armenians in California. I know that His Holiness Karekin II will have a very special visit to California and I wish the Armenian community in California an increased sense of purpose and inspiration.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LOVELAND, COLORADO, POLICE CHIEF TOM WAGONER

• Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the chief of police of