

through MRIs and CAT scans. This allows surgeons to look at the heart, open it, and prepare for the procedures that they are about to conduct. It meant less time on the heart-lung machine, and it improves the odds of a positive recovery. These medical breakthroughs—made possible by Federal, State, and private contributions—are giving millions of Americans hope.

In early January, surgeons at Prairie Heart Institute in my hometown of Springfield, IL, operated on a local woman from Decatur. The doctors replaced two diseased heart valves with artificial valves that were threaded into position inside catheters, smaller than the width of a pencil. This procedure is known as a double trans-catheter valve replacement. This successful surgery was only the fourth of its kind in the United States, and the first in the world to use the latest generation of artificial valves. The lead surgeons were from Prairie and Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. Had the valve not been replaced, the patient would have faced a substantially higher risk for death from congestive heart failure.

As co-chair of the Senate NIH Caucus, and co-chair of the bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition, I want to thank my colleagues for their commitment to lifesaving research for all Americans. I also want to thank the researchers, advocates, public health professionals, families, and patients for their leadership and tireless support for advancements in the science and treatment of heart diseases.

There is more work to be done, but I am optimistic for breakthroughs in the near future.

Thank you.

PLAN TO CLOSE THE GUANTANAMO BAY DETENTION FACILITY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for years, I have consistently opposed efforts by Congress to restrict the Obama administration's ability to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. The indefinite detention without trial of detainees at Guantanamo contradicts our most basic principles of justice, degrades our international standing, and harms our national security. The mere existence of this facility serves as a recruitment tool for terrorists, and the facility costs American taxpayers more than \$4 million per detainee each year—an astonishing amount of money that could be repurposed to keep our men and women in uniform safe.

I recently received a letter from former Marine Corps Commandant Charles Krulak, co-signed by an additional 60 retired generals and admirals that noted “closing Guantanamo is not just a national security imperative, it is about reestablishing the core values of who we are as a nation.” I could not agree more. I ask unanimous consent that General Krulak's letter be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

Last May, I wrote a letter to President Obama urging him to expedite the transfer of cleared detainees to foreign countries and accelerate the periodic review board process to determine if additional detainees could be transferred. Since that time, the President has made progress toward closing the Guantanamo detention facility. To date, only 91 detainees remain, and top national security officials have already cleared 35 of those detainees for transfer to foreign countries. I am encouraged that the plan unveiled by the administration yesterday morning calls for accelerating the review process to determine if additional detainees can be transferred, as I urged, and for completing that process by the fall.

Now that President Obama has delivered a plan, Congress must do its part and lift the unnecessary and counterproductive restrictions on transferring detainees to the United States, so that we can finally shutter Guantanamo once and for all. We should all want to see additional detainees finally brought to justice in our Federal court system, which has a long and proven track record in terrorism prosecutions—unlike the military commission system that has been bogged down in legal challenges and procedural hurdles.

The detention facility at Guantanamo Bay has been a stain on our national reputation for more than 14 years. Closing Guantanamo is the morally and fiscally responsible thing to do, and it is long past time to stop the fear-mongering so we can work together to close it down.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

FEBRUARY 23, 2016.

DEAR SENATOR LEAHY: I represent a coalition of more than 60 retired generals and admirals of the United States Armed Forces who have for years advocated the responsible closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. I write to urge you to give serious consideration to the recently submitted Department of Defense plan to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Closing Guantanamo is in our national security interest, and with the submission of the DOD plan, there is a unique opportunity for Congress to lift the remaining restrictions on transferring detainees so that Guantanamo can be closed.

Guantanamo continues to impose significant costs to our national security. As an offshore detention facility that—rightly or wrongly—represents to the world an image of detainee abuse and violations of the rule of law, Guantanamo undermines counterterrorism cooperation with allies and unnecessarily bolsters the propaganda and recruiting narratives that terrorists seek to advance. It is a travesty that the trial of the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks remains bogged down at Guantanamo nearly 15 years after 9/11.

The issue of what to do with Guantanamo is not a political issue. There is near unanimous agreement from our nation's top military, intelligence, and law enforcement leaders that Guantanamo should be closed. Even President George W. Bush, who opened Guantanamo after the 9/11 attacks, tried to close it, noting that “the detention facility had become a propaganda tool for our enemies and a distraction for our allies.”

We understand that some fear bringing even a small number of detainees to the United States as part of the plan to close Guantanamo. However, we are confident that those detainees can be held safely and securely stateside. Hundreds of terrorists are already being held in U.S. prisons—including one former Guantanamo detainee who is serving a life sentence. Rather than trying to invoke fear, we should applaud these communities that have successfully and safely detained society's worst without incident. In any event, the risks of keeping Guantanamo open far outweigh any risks associated with closing it.

In the coming days and weeks, we plan on more closely studying the Department of Defense's plan to close Guantanamo, and we hope you will do the same. Closing Guantanamo is not just a national security imperative, it is about reestablishing the core values of who we are as a nation, and we believe strongly that there must be a bi-partisan approach to achieving that objective.

Semper Fidelis,

CHARLES C. KRULAK,
General, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.).

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for today's vote on S. Res. 374, a resolution relating to the death of Antonin Scalia, Associate Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States. I would have voted yea.●

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD at this point the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,

Arlington, VA, February 23, 2016.

Hon. BOB CORKER,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 16-12, concerning the Department of the Air Force's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to Iraq for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$350 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan