Although the Department has determined not to appeal the district court's decision, it recognizes the severity of the charged conduct, its lifelong impact on victims, and the importance of a federal prohibition on FGM committed on minors. Accordingly, the Department urges Congress to amend Section 116(a) to address the constitutional issue that formed the basis of the district court's opinion in this case. Specifically, concurrently with submitting this letter, the Department is submitting to Congress a legislative proposal that would amend Section 116(a) to provide that FGM is a federal crime when (1) the defendant or victim travels in or uses a channel or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce in furtherance of the FGM; (2) the defendant uses a means, channel, facility, or instrumentality of interstate commerce in connection with the FGM; (3) a payment is made in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce in furtherance of the FGM; (4) an offer or other communication is made in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce in furtherance of the FGM; (5) the conduct occurs within the United States' special maritime and territorial jurisdiction, or within the District of Columbia or a U.S. territory; or (6) the FGM otherwise occurs in or affects interstate or foreign commerce. In our view, adding these provisions would ensure that, in every prosecution under the statute, there is a nexus to interstate commerce.

Please let me know if we can be of further assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

NOEL J. FRANCISCO,
Solicitor General.

RECOGNIZING THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE 389TH FIGHTER SQUADRON

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, the U.S. Air Force's 389th Fighter Squadron—known, respected, and feared around the globe as the Thunderbolts—flew downrange from the 366th Fighter Wing at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho to support Operations Inherent Resolve and Spartan Shield from October 2019 until June 2020. Led by Lt. Col. Rod ''Brick'' James, the squadron of F–15E Strike Eagles deployed to the United States Central Command area of responsibility for the fight against the Islamic State.

During its historic combat deployment, the T-Bolts employed 263 munitions of myriad types during over 2,600 sorties and a record 13,000 combat hours throughout CENTCOM. Demonstrating the rapid, agile, and lethal characteristics of airpower, the 389th executed close air support for troops in Syria and Iraq. In addition to CAS, the Squadron Weapons section loaded the first Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, AGM–158, expended in combat by the 366th Fighter Wing, for just one of a host of special missions. All the while a deterrent, the T-Bolts stood ready to defeat Iranian aggression if the call came. Finally, they stayed in the fight 50 percent longer than planned to ensure COVID–19 did not cause any loss of support to those who needed Strike Eagles overhead.

Throughout their deployment, the men and women of the 389th Fighter Squadron and Aircraft Maintenance Unit performed exceptionally under intense combat pressures executing a new, highly mobile deployment construct during a pandemic. The Thunderbolts represent the best America has to offer. They ride hard, shoot straight, and always speak the truth. I join all grateful Americans in congratulating this outstanding team on a job well done. Banzai.

TRIBUTE TO MARK LEDUC

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise to honor a member of my staff, Mark LeDuc, who will soon retire after decades of distinguished service. Mark exemplifies the ideal public servant, demonstrating integrity, thoroughness, a spirit of inquiry, and hard work in every undertaking. Above all, Mark has always demonstrated his belief that it is an honor to serve the people of Maine and our Nation.

Mark was born in New Jersey, but his father's final tour of duty in the U.S. Navy brought the family to Maine, where they were finally home. I first met Mark in 1986 at a campaign event for then-Representative John McKernan, who was running for Governor of the State of Maine. He had recently graduated from a joint degree program at Columbia Law School and the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. He had just moved back to Maine with his wife Marie, whom he had met while they were both studying at Princeton.

Mark and I both went on to work in the Governor McKernan's administration. Mark served as head of the Governor's legislative staff, and I was commissioner of professional and financial regulation in his cabinet. At the time, Maine's workers compensation market was in the midst of a crisis, leading to a 17-day State government shutdown. Mark and I worked closely together on the reform legislation that ended the shutdown and successfully resolved the crisis.

Mark held other roles in State government, but it was during his service in the Governor's office that I first saw and came to appreciate his ability to master complex issues and his dedication to public service.

Mark joined my Senate staff in 2003. He has served in various roles since that time, first in my personal office, then on my Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee staff, and now as chief counsel on my Aging Committee staff. Through the years, Mark has advised me with expertise and thoroughness on a wide range of issues. He served as my lead economic staffer on such legislation as the 2003 tax cuts, the 2008 Troubled Asset Relief Program, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Dodd-Frank financial regulatory reform legislation, and the Collins capital standards amendment. He also advised me on the economics of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and later put his knowledge of State insurance regulation to work when he helped me to draft the Lower Premiums Through Reinsurance Act.

Mark's most significant professional accomplishment may very well be the Paycheck Protection Program that he helped me craft earlier this year. During the devastating COVID–19 pandemic, this program has helped to sustain more than 50 million American jobs, including more than 250,000 jobs in the State of Maine, and I so appreciate the great knowledge and untiring energy he put into this crucial project. It was important, and it helped real people—the small business owners and their employees who are the backbone of communities across our Nation.

Mark has achieved great professional success, but what he is most proud of is his family. Mark and Marie have three daughters: Miriam-Rose, Julie, and Karen. While I am delighted for him that in his retirement he will have more time to spend with the family he loves so dearly, his absence as a member of my staff will be deeply felt.

Mark is a true public servant. He performs his work not for accolades but for a belief in helping people and doing what right. I wish him and his family all the best as they embark on this next chapter.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE GREAT PLAINS FOOD BANK

• Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, this has been a challenging year for millions of Americans impacted by the COVID–19 pandemic. Many organizations have stepped up to assist with delivering food, and I want to recognize one North Dakota organization that continues to expand its services to partner with other local organizations reaching out to those in need.

The Great Plains Food Bank has served communities in North Dakota since 1983, regularly dispatching trucks to all 53 counties across the State. With USDA estimates that 27 percent of all food produced in the United States never makes it to the dinner table, the Great Plains Food Bank's mission is to get this surplus food from those who have it to those who need it. It has joined forces with hundreds of food industry partners to recover their surplus shelf-stable and perishable food products. These include local, regional and national growers, processors, manufacturers, retailers, Federal and State government food programs, food drives, and Feeding America, the Nation's food bank network.

The Great Plains Food Bank took a significant step forward last month when it opened a second distribution center, this one in Bismarck, to better facilitate the delivery of food across western and central North Dakota, serving 100 soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters. This new warehouse now has room for freezers and refrigerators, office space and facilities for volunteers.