

Statement by Senator Susan M. Collins
Senate Passage of the HAVANA Act
June 8, 2021

Madam President, I rise today to applaud the swift, unanimous Senate passage last night of the Helping American Victims Afflicted by Neurological Attacks Act – the HAVANA Act. This bill will provide much-needed assistance to the employees of the Intelligence Community, the State Department, and other federal agencies who have suffered from often debilitating brain injuries at the hands of our foreign adversaries. Too often, Madam President, these injured public servants have had to battle the bureaucracy to receive the medical care they desperately require.

I am very pleased today to be joined on the Senate floor by the Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator Warner. He has been relentless in his pursuit of care for these injured public servants who risk their lives for us and serve in difficult and dangerous environments. Senator Warner, and the Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator Rubio, and Senator Shaheen of New Hampshire, worked with me to draft the bill that the Senate unanimously cleared last night.

We are very pleased that the following Senators co-sponsored our legislation: Senators Cornyn, Bennet, Burr, Gillibrand, Blunt, Heinrich, Sasse, Feinstein, Cotton, King, Risch, Durbin, Scott, Menendez, Blumenthal, and Hassan.

Madam President, I mention those co-sponsors to show the breadth of concern in the Senate about these injured employees. For several years, American personnel serving our country in Cuba, China, and elsewhere have experienced unexplained, serious medical harm, including in some cases, permanent brain injuries. Their conditions are believed to be the consequence of a mysterious, directed energy weapon used by an adversary. As we investigate the source of previous attacks and seek to prevent future ones, the bill that passed the Senate last night would provide additional medical care and financial compensation to Americans who continue to experience debilitating symptoms as a result of these heinous attacks.

Madam President, the injuries that many of these victims have endured are significant and life-altering. I have talked with many of these victims. They have described debilitating headaches, a loss of vision, a decreased ability to hear, dizziness, and many other symptoms as well, including a decline in their cognitive abilities. In some cases, they have been forced to medically retire. In other cases, they somehow continue on while coping with these symptoms. I have spoken several times to CIA Director Burns and the Director of National Intelligence Haines about these attacks, and I am heartened by the commitments that they have made to me and to other members of the Senate Intelligence Committee to care for the victims and to identify the perpetrators and the weapon used in these attacks. We can speculate. We have our suspicions. But the fact is, we do not know exactly what the weapon is, nor who is wielding it. We need a whole-of-government approach to identify the adversary who is targeting our American personnel. And I am grateful to the Chairman and Vice Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, who I know are committed to getting to the bottom of these attacks. I hope that when President Biden meets with President Putin, that he will ask President Putin

about these attacks, that he will grill him about them to see if the Russians are responsible. At this point, we do not know.

Madam President, the public servants who work in our embassies and consulates overseas make many personal sacrifices to represent America's interests. They deserve our unwavering support when they are harmed in the line of duty just as we care for soldiers who are injured on the battlefield. Last night, Madam President, we took an important step in that direction.

Thank you, Madam President.