

Even though our President is clueless about the basics of climate change, his Secretary of Defense understands and acknowledges the risks. In response to congressional questioning last year, Secretary Mattis said, "Climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today. . . . It is appropriate for the Combatant Commands to incorporate drivers of instability that impact the security environment in their areas into their planning."

Well, for political reasons, the White House can't acknowledge the problem so the recently published "National Security Strategy" totally disregards all of these recommendations. It will not even mention the forbidden words. We know these words are forbidden in the Trump administration because over and over again the memos leak out about people being told don't say the words "climate change."

Instead, with all these warnings from GAO, from senior military officials, from the National Intelligence Council, from a decade of Quadrennial Defense Reviews, and the testimony of Secretary Mattis—instead of listening to that, Trump parrots climate change denial talking points that come from the phony fossil fuel front groups. It is pathetic. Calling this deliberate ignorance "energy dominance" may be a fine fossil fuel flourish, but it is completely disconnected from actual safety, security, and military readiness—and don't get me started on what the fossil fuel industry's systematic corruption of our democracy means for America's fabled status as that "city on a hill."

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### IRAN

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss my thoughts on recent protests in Iran and the important upcoming decisions by the President with respect to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or the JCPOA.

While I am mindful that we have limited visibility into Iran and continue to learn more about the circumstances and motivations of the recent protests, one thing is clear: A significant portion of the Iranian people are not satisfied with their government and are increasingly willing to make their dissatisfaction heard. It is important that we support their right to peacefully express their views and demand that the Iranian Government respond with constructive dialogue, rather than force.

It was notable that Iranian President Ruhani implicitly recognized the validity of the protests earlier this week when he reportedly said:

It would be a misrepresentation and also an insult to Iranian people to say they only had economic demands. . . . People had economic, political and social demands

That is according to President Ruhani.

Acknowledging the need for reform, Ruhani continued:

We cannot pick a lifestyle and tell two generations after us to live like that. It is impossible. The views of the young generation about life and the world is different than ours.

Now is the time to support the Iranian people in their quest for a government that is more representative and supportive of their interests. Unfortunately, some have suggested that our response should be to withdraw from the JCPOA, an action that I believe would only serve to embolden the hardliners in Iran and leave the United States more isolated from our allies. Withdrawing from the JCPOA and re-imposing nuclear-related sanctions on Iran would immediately change the narrative inside of Iran, uniting reformists and hardliners alike in their opposition to what they view as a hostile United States.

While some would argue that the recent protests in Iran are symptomatic of what they view as a flawed JCPOA, I would suggest otherwise. In reality, the nuclear deal exposed one of the Iranian regime's central vulnerabilities—namely, that the regime can no longer simply blame sanctions imposed by the United States and the international community for its economic woes at home. It is becoming clearer to the Iranian people that it is actually the regime's corruption, financial mismanagement, funding of malign activities, and hegemonic ambitions that are at the root of their government's inability to enable job creation and to ensure that necessities like food and gasoline remain affordable.

In the coming days, the President has several important decisions to make with respect to the JCPOA. In October, President Trump acknowledged that Iran is meeting its commitments under the JCPOA, but he chose not to certify that continued sanctions relief is "appropriate and proportionate" to the actions taken by Iran with respect to terminating its illicit nuclear program. By the end of this week, President Trump is again required to decide whether to issue such a certification. I expect he will again choose not to do so.

The more consequential decision for the President this week will be whether to continue waivers of nuclear-related sanctions, as he is required to do under the JCPOA. Choosing not to continue such waivers would immediately snap back U.S. nuclear-related sanctions, thereby putting the United States in violation of the JCPOA. Let me be clear. This would be a unilateral action on behalf of the United States that would put us in violation of an international agreement, not just with Iran but with the United Kingdom,

France, Germany, Russia, and China, as well.

By all accounts, the JCPOA is working as intended, and Iran is verifiably meeting its commitments under the deal. It is important to remember what the JCPOA was designed to do and what it is now achieving. The JCPOA commits Iran to never seeking to develop or acquire a nuclear weapon; effectively cuts off all pathways for Iran to achieve a nuclear weapon during the period covered by the agreement; and increases the time it would take for Iran to acquire enough material for one nuclear bomb from 2 to 3 months to at least 1 year. When this agreement was signed, they were within months of having that capability. It dramatically reduces Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium and the number of installed centrifuges. It has prevented Iran from producing weapons-grade plutonium and has subjected Iran to robust monitoring by the IAEA to verify its compliance.

Withdrawing from the JCPOA at this point would provide no benefit and would actually leave us more isolated and less able to deal with the various challenges posed by Iran. The crippling sanctions regime that brought Iran to the negotiating table in the first place only worked because the international community was united in its determination to keep Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon. If we withdraw from the JCPOA unilaterally—and in the absence of a clear violation of the deal by Iran—there is no reason to believe that our partners in the P5+1 would join us. In fact, French President Macron has said that there is "no alternative" to the JCPOA and told the U.N. General Assembly that "renouncing it would be a grave error."

General Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Armed Services Committee last year:

I believe that the U.S. would incur damage vis-a-vis our allies if we unilaterally withdraw from the JCPOA. Our allies will be less likely to cooperate with us on future military action to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and less likely to cooperate with us on countering other destabilizing aspects of Iranian behavior that threaten our collective interests.

Our sanctions may snap back but not those imposed by the rest of the world, many of whom have begun building economic ties to Iran since the JCPOA was signed. Our international partners would then blame us, not Iran, for the failure of the deal.

Some, including President Trump, have argued that we can and should dissolve the JCPOA and renegotiate a better deal. This is a highly unrealistic proposal. We were only able to achieve the JCPOA after years of sustained multilateral diplomatic efforts and the imposition of aggressive international sanctions in concert with our partners. It will likely be impossible to replicate those conditions if the United States unilaterally withdraws from the JCPOA.

Contrary to President Trump's belief, threatening to walk away from the

deal actually weakens our ability to address the JCPOA's perceived flaws by alienating our partners. Instead, we should remain committed to the JCPOA and lead the international community in imposing additional sanctions, where necessary, to change other Iranian behaviors—namely, their respect for human rights, ballistic missile development efforts, and other malign activities.

We must also seek to help enable the Iranian people to make their choices heard, including by encouraging the adoption of social media and other means of communication. We could start by building upon general licenses issued by the Obama administration designed to encourage the export of communications technology to Iran.

Secretary Mattis told the Armed Services Committee at his confirmation hearing: "When America gives her word, we have to live up to it and work with our allies."

If the President decides this week not to continue nuclear-related sanctions relief for Iran, he will be effectively choosing to restart the Iranian nuclear program, thereby making military conflict with Iran more likely.

Withdrawing from the deal would also be a devastating blow to our efforts toward diplomacy with North Korea—and for that matter, any future diplomatic efforts to constrain aggressive behavior by our adversaries. Why would any nation engage with us in serious dialogue to resolve differences if they fear we will later withdraw unilaterally, even when the other parties are complying with the agreement?

Regardless of whether you supported the JCPOA before it was signed, the truth is that it has removed the greatest threat we faced from Iran while also preserving all other means to address Iran's malign activities. Let there be no doubt—Iran continues to be a state sponsor of terrorism and an abuser of human rights. Iran continues to destabilize the region through its development of ballistic missiles and support of proxies in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and elsewhere. If Iran behaves this way without a nuclear weapon, imagine how much worse a nuclear-armed Iran would be.

Fortunately, our nonnuclear sanctions on Iran remain in place and are unaffected by the JCPOA. In fact, Congress authorized additional sanctions in July to help deal with these issues. The administration should work with our international partners and use all tools at its disposal, including by ramping up nonnuclear sanctions, where necessary, to counter Iran's unacceptable behavior in these other areas.

Abrogating the JCPOA only invites another nuclear crisis like the one we are currently facing with North Korea—a concern echoed by General Dunford when he appeared before the Armed Services Committee and said: "It makes sense to me that our holding up agreements that we have signed, un-

less there's a material breach, would have impact on others' willingness to sign agreements."

Many have criticized the JCPOA as a "flawed deal." For example, concerns have been raised that certain provisions sunset after a period of years, thereby delaying rather than permanently preventing Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon. If the concern is that Iran may seek to resume nuclear weapons development activities after these sunsets—a concern that I share—the appropriate course of action is not to throw out the deal but to work with our international partners to ensure that necessary restrictions on the JCPOA are appropriately extended or supplemented.

As I noted before, Iran has committed in perpetuity not to develop or seek to acquire nuclear weapons. We should not take them at their word; we should verify their adherence to this commitment, just as we are doing under the JCPOA. If at any point in the future we have evidence to suggest Iran is taking steps that would indicate a violation of that commitment, we should use that information to rally the P5+1 and other international partners to take a unified stand against such efforts. Unilaterally withdrawing from the JCPOA would seriously damage our ability to exert such leadership in the future.

Again, according to General Dunford, in the absence of the JCPOA, Iran would likely resume its nuclear weapons program and "a nuclear-armed Iran would likely be more aggressive in its actions and more dangerous in its consequences." General Dunford also told the committee that "the intel community assessment is, in fact, that Iran is in compliance right now [with the JCPOA], and therefore, I think we should focus on addressing the other challenges: the missile threat they pose, the maritime threat they pose, the support of proxies, terrorists, and the cyber threat they pose." I wholeheartedly agree with General Dunford's assessment.

Our troops in Iraq and Syria are operating in close proximity to Iranian-aligned militias, including those who previously targeted American troops. Unilaterally withdrawing from the JCPOA could embolden these hardline militias and possibly result in Iran giving them a green light to begin targeting U.S. forces once more.

Furthermore, while I have full confidence in our military's ability to fight and win wars when necessary, we cannot escape the reality that military contingencies to respond to both a nuclear-armed North Korea and Iran would result in massive loss of life and national treasure and greatly stress our military's capacity and capabilities.

In conclusion, I will return to where I began. Now is not the time to impose a self-inflicted wound upon our foreign policy and standing in the world. Unilaterally withdrawing from the JCPOA

would empower Iranian hardliners and dramatically undermine the reform-minded protests we should be seeking to empower. Worse still, it would leave us more isolated in the international community and, by extension, less able to address the range of national security challenges posed by Iran, North Korea, and our other potential adversaries.

We must not abdicate the JCPOA or American leadership on these issues. Therefore, I urge the President to stay the course with respect to the JCPOA, while also rallying the international community to take effective actions intended to change other unacceptable behaviors by the Iranian regime to suppress dissent at home and sow instability abroad. We must not squander this opportunity by making the story about the United States rather than the courageous Iranians who at great risk to themselves have taken to the streets to demand a better future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The clerk will call the roll. The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 12 noon tomorrow, all postcloture time on the Brown nomination be considered expired and the Senate vote on confirmation of the Brown nomination with no intervening action or debate; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Counts nomination, all postcloture time be considered expired at 1:45 p.m. tomorrow and the Senate vote on confirmation of the Counts nomination with no intervening action or debate; finally, that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider with respect to the Brown and Counts nominations be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

#### MISSILE DEFENSE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, for about 20 years now, I have viewed the development and deployment of a layered ballistic missile defense shield as probably singularly the most vital thing we could be doing around here. People are aware of that now. Adversaries, like North Korea and others, have ballistic missiles, and they are increasing their range capability. Iran is getting almost everything. One of the problems you have is that you get countries like North Korea developing missile capabilities, and if they have it, then other adversaries have it. I am talking about Yemen and all the rest of them.

It is important for us to communicate to the American people that the