

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