

11 is outrageous; it is un-American; it is insulting to every 9/11 first responder, survivor, and family.

So, today, I sent a letter, with Senator GILLIBRAND, to Secretary Kennedy, urging him to immediately reverse the cuts that impacted the World Trade Center Health Program. Donald Trump, Secretary Kennedy, and DOGE have betrayed our sacred promise to never, never forget.

And what is the point of these cruel cuts? So Donald Trump and DOGE can give their billionaire buddies a tax break and have the 9/11 families pay the cost.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain touted the now-infamous Munich Agreement as a way to stave off Hitler's Nazi Germany. Prime Minister Chamberlain claimed it would "secure peace in our time." A year later, Hitler invaded Poland and triggered World War II, a devastating conflict that left Europe in ruins and millions dead and displaced.

Over time, Chamberlain's name became synonymous with the word "appeasement" for good reason. You see, while Chamberlain's goal of peace may have been honorable, he was dangerously naive about the human nature of a tyrant in Germany who was bent on territorial ambition, pursuits that could only be thwarted with a show of strength. Well, President Trump's "Art of the Deal" opening negotiation with Vladimir Putin has the same odor of appeasement.

Last week, Donald Trump announced he was ready to make a deal with Russian President Putin over Ukraine while, apparently, ignoring Ukraine's key demands for peace. In fact, Trump and his fledgling Defense Secretary publicly gave away huge concessions at the start, signaling they would not insist on a return to Ukraine's sovereign 2014 borders or future NATO membership. It is also not clear from the administration's bewildering Munich Security Conference's remarks if President Trump plans to even include Ukraine or our European allies in the negotiations for the future of Ukraine.

It is no wonder that, in the United Kingdom, where they remember Chamberlain's folly all too well, Donald Trump's early pronouncements were lambasted for their misreading of history by leaders across the political spectrum. Let me share some of the things that have been said by our ally United Kingdom about Trump's opening bid to end the war in Ukraine.

One member of Parliament lamented that the West now "might be facing the worst betrayal of a European ally since Poland in 1945."

And another said:

Surely, in Europe, we understand that no matter what we give Vladimir Putin, he is always going to want more.

And one final member of Parliament, in a refrain, I think, that best summarizes the situation, said:

[There] is less the Art of the Deal and more a charter for appeasement.

President Trump has always had a strange affinity for autocrats and dictators, a troubling character weakness for the leader of the free world to have. He almost seems to want their adoration and admiration, especially compared to the clear-eyed leadership of previous leaders even on the Republican side, like Ronald Reagan, who knew how to deal with the Soviets. But there are real consequences to Trump's autocratic liaisons for America and allied security, ones that Republicans in the Senate ought to take pretty seriously. His crazy rants about Greenland, Canada as the 51st State, Panama, and the so-called Gulf of Mexico may be amusing to some, including himself, but it certainly does not portend well for a foreign policy of the United States. Simply caving in to Putin and walking away from Ukraine—just as Chamberlain did to Hitler—is an invitation for more confrontations in the future.

Before I was elected to the House of Representatives in the 1970s, I was a guest of an organization known as the American Council of Young Political Leaders, ACYPL. They take young men and women who are aspiring to public office on trips to various parts of the world where you spend an extra amount of time to come to understand the situation. I was lucky. I had an opportunity to visit the Soviet Union in the worst Cold War atmosphere and environment—more than 2½ weeks in the Soviet Union moving from one city to the other and seeing what Soviet communism looked like.

During the course of that trip, we visited what was then the Soviet Republic of Lithuania. It had a personal appeal to me for family reasons. My mother was born in Lithuania and was an immigrant to the United States at the age of 2. I had never been there before, and I was shocked by what I saw. This once great country had become a vassal of the Soviet state, and the poor people there were struggling to maintain the most basic of freedoms. Lucky for me, a few years later, I was elected to Congress, serving first in the House and now in the Senate, and I have been able to see a dramatic rebirth of Lithuania.

Of course, at the end of the Soviet Union, they had their chance and fought for democracy. They gave lives and blood for that purpose, but it worked. They won their freedom, their independence.

Lithuania is not a big country with a big military budget. It is a small nation with a good military but certainly no match for anyone like Russia today. They have been concerned ever since that the day would come when Russia would reassert its ownership of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. So that is why they became members of NATO.

And what a celebration that brought on to realize, finally, that they were allies of the United States and had a NATO treaty to back them up, to protect them.

The same is true of Poland. Of course, Poland means a lot to Chicago and Illinois, and they are worried about the same fate: Now having won their independence, will they see it threatened by Russia in the future?

And so this decision by President Trump to reach out directly to Putin and negotiate is worrisome to me in many respects. First, what does it say if the NATO alliance, an alliance which used to bring together some of the greatest nations in the world to stand by their side one by one and protect the future of their country—President Trump is not even engaging the NATO alliance in this conversation about the future of Ukraine. In fact, he is hardly engaging Ukraine in this conversation.

I worry about where this is going to lead. I hope it leads to peace in Ukraine, the right kind of peace that we can count on. And I hope that the people of that country, who have shown such extraordinary courage with the support of the United States and NATO up until now, realize that we are still committed to the values that they value as well. That is in our future.

But I worry the opposite will occur, that President Trump will give in to Putin and his demands and Putin will then target the Baltics, Poland—and I don't know where—in his next assault on sovereignty. That is the reality of the moment.

NOMINATION OF KASHYAP PATEL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on a separate topic, later this week, Senate Republicans have scheduled a vote on the confirmation of Kash Patel, President Trump's nominee for FBI Director. It is a 10-year appointment, unusual by Senate standards, but it was designed to be 10 years so it would be depoliticized.

It is unfortunate that the Republicans are moving ahead despite the many problems with Mr. Patel's record. Mr. Patel has no experience—none—in administration and management, particularly of an organization like the FBI that has 38,000 agents in place—38,000. It is the premier criminal investigative Agency in our country, perhaps the world.

After meeting with Mr. Patel and reviewing his record and questioning him under oath at his hearing, I am deeply concerned about his fitness to serve as FBI Director. He has neither the experience, the judgment, nor the temperament to lead the FBI.

My Senate Republican colleagues, sadly, are willfully ignoring myriad red flags about Mr. Patel, especially his recurring instinct to threaten retribution against his political enemies and President Trump's perceived enemies. This is an extremely dangerous characteristic for someone who seeks to