

Senate Banking Committee member joined him in rejecting a different sanctions package in 2008.

Simply put, Senator Hagel has no credibility on perhaps the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the Obama administration's second term and on American national security interests in the Middle East and around the world.

Consider how his nomination was interpreted by Iranian journalists and government officials. Press TV, a Tehran-based propaganda network, noted with satisfaction that Senator Hagel is known for "his criticism of Washington's anti-Iran policies" and "has consistently opposed any plan to launch [a] military strike against Iran."

The point is, not that we should be threatening military strikes against Iran, but to take this off the table entirely completely undercuts any diplomatic efforts we might take to deny Iran a nuclear weapon.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry responded to the Hagel announcement by declaring:

We hope that practical changes will be created in the U.S. foreign policy and . . . that the U.S. officials will favor peace instead of warmongering.

The Iranians are claiming we are the ones warmongering, while they are building a nuclear weapon.

Just for good measure, the Al Jazeera Web site published an article headlined: "Obama defeats the Israel Lobby." Is this really the impression we want to give our adversaries and our allies in the Middle East? Is this how we encourage our friends, to say we will be there to support our allies? Is this the message we want to convey to our adversaries such as Iran, that has threatened the annihilation of Israel, to wipe it off the map? Unfortunately, that is the message that is conveyed by the nomination of Senator Hagel as Secretary of Defense.

Not only has Senator Hagel been a persistent critic of Iran sanctions, he has also displayed a stubborn hostility toward America's closest Middle Eastern ally.

In October 2000, shortly after Yasser Arafat launched the second Intifada, 96 Senators signed a letter to President Clinton affirming their solidarity with Israel. Senator Hagel was not among them. Six months later, after a relentless onslaught of Palestinian terrorism, 87 Senators signed a different letter asking President Bush to "initiate a reassessment of our relations with the Palestinians." Once again, Senator Hagel refused to sign. He also refused to join 89 other Senators in signing a November 2001 letter that urged President Bush to maintain strong support for Israel and to continue snubbing Arafat until the Palestinian leader ended his terror campaign.

On April 12, 2002, a Palestinian suicide bomber killed 6 people and injured more than 100 others in Jerusalem.

That same day, Senator Hagel went to the Senate floor and suggested a moral equivalence between Palestinian terrorism and Israeli self-defense.

Three months later, he published an article in the Washington Post bemoaning "the endless cycle of violence" and declaring that "Israel must take steps to show its commitment to peace."

In a 2003 interview with a local newspaper in Lincoln, NE, Senator Hagel ratcheted up his rhetoric even further, saying the Israelis "keep Palestinians caged up like animals."

In 2009, Senator Hagel coauthored a policy paper that advised President Obama to pursue a dialog with Hamas—again, a State Department-designated terrorist organization; Iran's primary proxy in the area. More specifically, the paper recommended that Washington "offer [Hamas] inducements that will enable its more moderate elements to prevail, and cease discouraging third parties from engaging with Hamas in ways that might help clarify the movement's views and test its behavior."

Most of us believe, including the U.S. State Department, that Hamas' views and behavior are already clear enough: It is committed to the annihilation of Israel; it fires rockets and Iranian-made missiles at civilian areas; and it indoctrinates Palestinian children in a culture of hatred and violence.

Of course, Senator Hagel's most famous comments—or I should say infamous comments—on Israel were delivered during a 2006 interview with former Clinton administration official Aaron David Miller. In that interview, Senator Hagel said "the Jewish lobby intimidates a lot of people up here." These remarks are deeply offensive, but they are also quite revealing, for they confirm that he simply does not understand the true basis of the U.S.-Israeli alliance.

The American people and their elected representatives support Israel for obvious reasons: Both of our countries are pluralistic democracies with a shared commitment to liberty, equality, and basic human rights; both of our countries are threatened by radical Islam; and both of our countries have responded to that threat while remaining free and open societies.

In other words, we have an alliance based on shared values and a common determination to defend liberal democracy against terrorists and dictators alike.

I realize Senator Hagel is now repudiating many of his past actions and statements, but we have seen this before, unfortunately: individuals approaching the confirmation process undergoing a seeming transformation. But this sudden and convenient transformation beggars belief. Senator Hagel has not undergone an abrupt ideological makeover; he just wants to win approval from Members of this Chamber in what we might call a "confirmation conversion."

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HOEVEN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HOEVEN. I ask unanimous consent that the period of morning business be extended until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise today to advocate for a secure energy future for our Nation. There is no question that we can achieve energy security or energy independence for our country, and I believe we can do it within the next 5 years.

I define energy security or energy independence as producing more energy than we consume. I mean, this is an interrelated, high-tech global economy. Energy will move back and forth between nations, but we truly become energy secure when we produce more energy than we consume. But to do that, to achieve energy independence or energy security, we must take the commonsense steps necessary to achieve it. That is why today, once again, I call on President Obama to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline project now that Governor Heineman of Nebraska has approved the new route through his State of Nebraska.

The Keystone XL Pipeline is not just about bringing Canadian oil to U.S. refineries, it is also vital to move our own U.S.-produced oil through our refineries. In fact, that is how I got involved with this project in the first place.

Although it is hard to believe, TransCanada first applied for approval of this project 4½ years ago. Let me repeat that—4½ years ago. At that time, I was Governor of North Dakota, and I was working with Governor Brian Schweitzer, of Montana, to make sure that oil producers in the Bakken regions of our States, in North Dakota and Montana, could put light sweet crude oil from the Bakken into the Keystone XL Pipeline. We met with TransCanada, contacted our oil producers, met with TransCanada, and they agreed. TransCanada agreed to an on-ramp so that the Keystone XL Pipeline would move North Dakota and Montana light sweet crude from the Bakken to refineries throughout the United States—to refineries in Illinois, Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana, hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil from our oilfields from day one.

That is what this chart shows. Here you see the original Keystone Pipeline that was built during my tenure as Governor. Here we show the route of the Keystone XL Pipeline, and you can see that it comes through North Dakota and Montana—our Bakken region—so that we can put oil into the pipeline. It gives us access to all these refineries in Illinois, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana.

We are talking about U.S. energy, we are talking about U.S. jobs, and we are talking about commerce in our country, getting our economy growing and growing. We are talking about generating tax revenue without raising taxes to help with our debt and our deficit, and we are talking about energy security. Why wouldn't anyone want that? Why wouldn't everyone support this project? Why is it being held up? Why is the President holding up this project? Because the net effect is, with President Obama continuing to hold up this project, we are continuing to rely on oil from the Middle East when we could be relying on oil that we produce here at home and from our closest friend and ally, Canada.

Well, some argue, it is because producing oil from the oil sands in Canada creates more greenhouse gas emissions. Let's look at the facts—not rhetoric, not hype, not spin, let's look at the facts. Oil sands crude produces about 6 percent more carbon dioxide than the U.S. crude supply average—the average. Canadian oil sands crude produces less carbon dioxide than the heavy crude we get from California or the heavy crude we get from the Middle East. Think of that. By blocking the Keystone XL Pipeline, President Obama will continue to require that we rely on heavy crude from the Middle East rather than crude that is produced with less emissions from Canada. How can that make sense?

Furthermore, since 1990 Canada has reduced the greenhouse gas emissions associated with every barrel of oil sands crude by almost 30 percent, and the technology continues to improve. Canada is investing \$3 billion in carbon capture and storage technology—\$3 billion. Eighty percent of the new development in Canadian oil sands is in situ production, meaning drilling—like conventional drilling—rather than the old method of excavation, and that means a smaller environmental footprint.

Still, someone might say: Well, I don't care about that. I don't care. I just don't want the Canadian oil sands produced.

The Canadian oil sands are going to be produced, just as sure as death and taxes. They are going to be produced. The only question is whether the oil comes to us or goes to China.

I want to show my second chart. It is a simple map. The oil is going to be produced, but is it going to come down, pick up oil from our oilfields, and move that product to our refineries, state-of-the-art refineries with lower emissions,

or is that oil, as you can see from these green lines, going to go to the west coast of Canada and there be put on ships and sent to refineries in China and be refined in their refineries, which have much higher emissions?

If it goes to China, that means there will be more greenhouse gas emissions as the oil is transported via tankers across the ocean rather than a pipeline, and you also have the added risk of spills in the ocean, affecting the ocean ecosystem. Meanwhile, we will continue to get oil from the Middle East with higher greenhouse gas emissions and the risk of tanker spills rather than the greater safety and the lower cost of pipelines, not to mention the fact that we continue our dependence on oil from the Middle East. How can we continue to depend on energy from the Middle East when we see what is going on, when we see what is going on in Syria, when we see what is going on in Egypt and we see what is going on in Iran?

Recently, I attended the movie "Argo." It is a great movie. If you haven't seen "Argo," I would recommend it. I would recommend it to anyone. It is about the Iran hostage crisis in 1979. Six American diplomats fled to the Canadian Embassy when the U.S. Embassy was stormed by the Iranians. Our people, as you remember, were held at the Embassy in Iran for 444 days. We all remember that terrible time.

This movie is the story of how our government, working through the CIA, working with the Canadian Government, helped the six Americans out who were able to get to the Canadian Embassy. Our governments worked together and helped those hostages—in this case, the six who weren't taken hostage but the six who were at the Canadian Embassy—took them out of Iran. It really is a great story. It is a story of how the United States and Canada worked together when a Middle Eastern country that defines the United States as the "Great Satan" was holding our people hostage.

Here we are today continuing to rely on oil from the Middle East. We cannot continue to rely on the volatile countries of the Middle East for our energy. The American people couldn't be more clear. We have to stop our addiction to Middle Eastern oil. At the same time, we can't continue to send them billions of our dollars as we buy the oil, billions of dollars that are used against us. We can and we must rely on ourselves. We must rely on those we can count on, such as our closest friend and ally, Canada.

If we don't learn from history, we are doomed to repeat the failures of the past. The time has come to act.

President Obama, the time has come to give us a decision on the Keystone XL Pipeline. The time has come to approve it. On a bipartisan basis, we have worked to address all of the concerns you have raised regarding the project, including the new route through Nebraska.

On a bipartisan basis, we have asked to meet with President Obama, Republicans and Democrats together. The response has been silence and delay. The fact is that we can build a bright energy future for this country, but we need the President to join with us to do that. We can create energy, jobs, tax revenues that will reduce our debt and deficit without raising tax rates, and energy independence for our Nation.

Again, I ask President Obama to work with us, to work with us on a bipartisan basis, and the winners will be the American people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO STAFFORD, KANSAS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, in my home State of Kansas, there are hundreds of small communities that line the highways and county roads that stretch across the prairie part of the country. In many of these towns, the populations are shrinking, but they are still called home by thousands of Kansans.

I grew up in one of those small communities out in western Kansas, a place where folks know their neighbors and they try to take care of them. Much of what I know about people, about human nature, is what I learned by growing up in a small town where we all knew each other. I worked at the local hardware store, swimming pool, the drugstore, and I had a paper route and got to meet almost everybody in my hometown.

In these small communities across America, the people work hard, they come together to find commonsense solutions, and they solve problems. They try to make a difference in the lives of their families and the community. They also strive to provide a better future for their kids so that every child has the opportunity to grow up, pursue the American dream, and reach their goals.

For rural communities to survive and prosper, citizens have to work together to create their own opportunities for success. What happens here in Washington, DC, has a huge consequence on the future of rural communities in my State. The reality is that those communities that are going to have a bright future are those that decide on their own to work together within that community to make certain that is the case.

An example of a community that rallied together in this way to make good things happen and to make the community better for the future is the community of Stafford, population 1,042. I would like to recognize the efforts by this community, the Stafford residents, with the Building Better Communities Award. They made the effort to preserve their town for another generation.

Rural communities across our State have been hit hard by the economic