

offered would increase accountability and much stronger safeguards in the U.S. regulatory system. Regulations are what the bureaucracy does. We can't vote for them or against them. We can't hold them accountable that way, and they are out of control. If someone wants to know why those bills are so important, it is because last year the Obama administration imposed \$112 billion worth of new regulations on the U.S. economy—\$112 billion worth of new regulations in 2013 alone.

Our colleague from Alaska, Senator MURKOWSKI, who is the ranking member of the energy committee, is rightly concerned about the impact of misguided regulations on our energy industry—primarily the oil and gas industry—and she has taken the time to draft a bold plan for reforming U.S. energy policy that would promote economic growth, job creation, national security, and responsible stewardship of our environment.

In conclusion, I wish to recognize—in terms of a summary of some of the ideas, 23 of which I have on this card, but I will just mention a few of them—the ideas of our colleague from Utah, Senator MIKE LEE, and his efforts to reform our dysfunctional tax system in a way that supports middle class families who are working hard to provide for their children. We should agree, as Senator LEE has advocated, that tax reform should aim not just to simplify the Tax Code and fuel job growth, but also to ease the burden on hard-working, middle-class families.

There are a lot of great ideas out there. I can't think of a better time to talk about them than this time, when the President of the United States has made a priority of income inequality which, unfortunately, has become worse under his administration, not better. This has been further exacerbated by burdens such as ObamaCare, which we find out is just a bundle of broken promises, including: "If you like what you have, you can keep it." "It will lower costs, not increase them." We are finding out none of that is true.

There are a lot of great ideas that we could, working together in the interests of the American people, agree on that would actually improve their economic situation and help restore the American dream. But what is the American dream to somebody who has been out of work and can't find work? It is a disappointment to say the least. We need to help people to not maintain their dependency on a government benefit in perpetuity but to liberate them from that dependency, to help them regain their self respect and sense of dignity by finding work and providing for themselves and their families, and to live their version of the American dream. In the process we all benefit. The Federal Government can pay its bills because people are paying taxes because they have good jobs, and America will be the same America we inherited from our parents and grand-

parents and, hopefully, we will make it better for the next generation and beyond.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

SOUTH SUDAN

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I have taken the floor of the Senate—and when I was a Member of the House, the floor of the House—to talk about circumstances that are occurring somewhere in the world where people are being killed, displaced; people are being uprooted simply because of their ethnicity. Ethnic cleansing has occurred around the world. I have taken the opportunity to put a spotlight on it in an effort to say that the civilized world needs to bring an end to those types of crimes against humanity. I have used the opportunity as a member of the Helsinki Commission, and now as chairman of the Helsinki Commission, to point out what America's priority needs to be, and that is to be a leader in the world to prevent ethnic cleansing.

Many of us believed, after World War II, that the world would never again allow circumstances wherein people were killed simply because of the ethnic community to which they belong. I have spoken about Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, and Syria, and now we see the same thing happening again in South Sudan.

I just came from a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that was convened to discuss the crisis in South Sudan with two witnesses: the Honorable Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of African Affairs, and the Honorable Nancy E. Lindborg, Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. These two witnesses were giving an update to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as to the circumstances in South Sudan and what we can do to try to bring about a resolution.

I rise today to discuss the deteriorating circumstances in South Sudan. As some of my colleagues may know, ongoing political tensions between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and forces loyal to the former Vice President Riek Machar, coupled with pre-existing ethnic tensions, erupted in violence the night of December 15. I join the President and Secretary Kerry in calling for an immediate end to the violence in South Sudan. Currently, it is estimated that nearly 200,000 people have been internally displaced as a result of the conflict, with another 32,000 having fled to neighboring States. The U.N. estimates that thousands of Sudanese people have been killed since December 15. Let me just remind my colleagues that three years ago today the people of South Sudan started a voting process that later that year led to their independence as the youngest new country in the world.

Our U.S. Ambassador, Susan Page, has remained in Juba, along with a security detail and minimum key personnel. I thank her; it is very courageous of her to remain in South Sudan so we have our leadership on the ground to try to help the people. I applaud her bravery and sacrifice and those who are with her.

The worsening violence has spurred a humanitarian crisis. The President has nominated Ambassador Booth to be our ambassador to that region to try to get a peace process started. He is currently in Ethiopia trying to get the international community to respond to a political solution to South Sudan. The international community has responded rapidly, including by working to significantly expand the size of the U.N. mission in South Sudan, but since the evacuation of foreign aid workers, most humanitarian agencies and the international NGOs are heavily reliant on brave South Sudanese staff who put their lives at risk to help their people.

These are large numbers for the country of Sudan—the number of people displaced and the number of people killed. Let me share with my colleagues one of many examples of the crisis and how it has affected people in that region.

I recently learned that at the onset of the December clashes, one local staff person from an American NGO was rounded up, along with seven members of his family, and taken to a police station in Juba. He ultimately escaped to the U.N. compound, but his family was killed, along with more than 200 others. He is from the Nuer ethnic group, which now lives in fear of ethnic targeting by members of the country's security forces from another ethnic group, the Dinka. Media reports also suggest that individuals in uniforms have entered the U.N. bases in several locations and forcibly removed civilians taking shelter there. On December 21, two U.N. peacekeepers were killed after a group attacked a U.N. peace-keeping base that was sheltering 20 civilians.

There is no safe harbor today in South Sudan. The U.N.'s base can be overrun, and people killed because of their ethnicity. The international community must respond.

I remain extremely concerned at the reports out of South Sudan, all of which suggest serious crimes against humanity are occurring in the country. The world cannot stand by and bear witness to another ethnic cleansing as we have seen in so many other places around the world. We must do all we can to ensure a peaceful resolution of the crisis and accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity in South Sudan.

Our first priority is to get peace on the ground, to stop the killings, so people can live in peace. We need to work with the international community so humanitarian aid can get to the people who need it—and that is very challenging considering that international

NGOs cannot operate today in South Sudan—and we must hold accountable those who have committed crimes against humanity. We have said it over and over, but unless we hold accountable those who have perpetrated these atrocities, we will see it again and again. U.S. leadership is critically important to make sure that we document what has taken place and that we bring to justice those who are responsible for the crimes that have been committed.

There is no question that a solution to the crisis in South Sudan must be political and not military. We understand that. South Sudan again is at a crossroads, and after coming so far, it must choose to renounce violence immediately and pursue a path of peaceful reconciliation.

I am encouraged that President Kiir and former President Machar have sent negotiators to Ethiopia to participate in mediation talks. While these talks are a good first step, in the interim the violence must end, and both sides must be committed to negotiating in good faith. It is my hope these talks can bring about the bright future so many South Sudanese aspire for. The people of South Sudan deserve to understand the true meaning of safety and security, of peace, and prosperity. The United States stands with the people of South Sudan through these difficult times. We must pledge to continue to support those who seek peace, democracy, human rights, and justice for all of the citizens of the world's newest nation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask consent to address the Senate as in morning business.

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

Mr. MCCAIN. My colleague from South Carolina will join me shortly on the floor, but I will make some remarks while I am waiting.

When the Senator from South Carolina joins me, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with the Senator from South Carolina.

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

FALLUJAH

Mr. MCCAIN. Some of us were in the Senate 10 years ago in 2004 when U.S. troops led two major offensives against Al Qaeda and other militants in the Iraqi city of Fallujah. Some of us remember how 146 of our brave men and women in uniform lost their lives and more than 1,000 were wounded. Those

ights were some of the bloodiest and toughest battles since the Vietnam war. Success was costly, but success we had. Ten years later, Al Qaeda fighters have once again raised their black flags over Fallujah, and they are battling to control other parts of Iraq.

This tragic setback is leaving many of our brave Iraq war veterans—and especially those who shed their blood, risked their lives, and lost their friends in fighting against Fallujah—questioning what their sacrifice was worth. Sadly, they find themselves agreeing with Congressman DUNCAN HUNTER, a former marine who fought in Fallujah. He said:

We did our job. We did what we were asked to do, and we won. Every single man and woman who fought in Iraq, and especially in those cities, feels a kick in the gut for all they did, because this President decided to squander their sacrifice.

Prior to 2011, President Obama frequently referred to a responsible withdrawal from Iraq, which was based on leaving behind a stable and representative government in Baghdad and avoiding a power vacuum that terrorists could exploit.

The President's Deputy National Security Adviser Antony Blinken in 2012—and I am not making this up—stated that "Iraq today is less violent, more democratic, and more prosperous . . . than any other time in history."

Based on the President's own markers, the administration is falling short of its own goals. The illusion of a stable and representative government has been shattered by increasing sectarian tension, and it is clear terrorists are exploiting the power vacuum left behind.

The Obama administration blames Iraqis for failing to grant the necessary privileges and immunities for a U.S. force presence beyond 2011. This is misleading—in fact, false—because as we saw firsthand, the administration never took the necessary diplomatic effort to reach such an agreement.

The Senator from South Carolina and I traveled to Iraq in May 2011, only several months away from the deadline that our commanders had set for the beginning of the withdrawal. We met with all the leaders of Iraq's main political blocs and we heard a common message during all of these private conversations: Iraqi leaders recognized it was in their country's interest to maintain a limited number of U.S. troops to continue training and assisting Iraqi security forces beyond 2011.

But when we asked Ambassador Jeffrey and the Commander of U.S. Forces in Iraq Lloyd Austin, while in a meeting with Prime Minister Maliki, how many U.S. troops remaining in Iraq would perform and how many the administration sought to maintain, they couldn't tell us or the Iraqis. The White House still had not made a decision.

It went on like this for the next few months. By August 2011, leaders of Iraq's main political blocs joined to-

gether and stated they were prepared to enter negotiations to keep some U.S. troops in Iraq. An entire month passed and still the White House made no decision. All the while, during this internal deliberation, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff GEN Martin Dempsey later testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the size of a potential U.S. force presence kept cascading down from upwards of 16,000 to an eventual low of less than 3,000. By that point, the force would be able to do little other than protect itself, and Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders realized the political cost of accepting this proposal was not worth the benefit.

To blame this failure entirely on the Iraqis is convenient, but it misses the real point. The reason to keep around 10,000 to 15,000 U.S. forces in Iraq was not for the sake of Iraq alone. It was first and foremost in our national security interest to continue training and advising Iraqi forces and to maintain greater U.S. influence in Iraq. That core principle should have driven a very different U.S. approach to the SOFA—the status of forces agreement—diplomacy.

The Obama administration should have recognized that after years of brutal conflict, Iraqi leaders still lacked trust in one another, and a strong U.S. role was required to help Iraqis broker their most politically sensitive decisions. For this reason the administration should have determined what tasks and troop numbers were in the national interest to maintain in Iraq and done so with ample time to engage with Iraqis at the highest level of the U.S. Government to shape political conditions in Baghdad to achieve our goal.

We focus on this failure not because U.S. troops would have made a decisive difference in Iraq by engaging in unilateral combat operations against Al Qaeda and other threats to Iraq's stability. By 2011, U.S. forces were no longer in Iraqi cities or engaged in security operations. However, residual U.S. troop presence could have assisted Iraqi forces in their continued fight against Al Qaeda, it could have provided a platform for greater diplomatic engagement and intelligence cooperation with our Iraqi partners, it could have made Iranian leaders think twice about using Iraqi airspace to transit military assistance and weapons and arms and equipment to Assad and his forces in Syria and, most importantly, it could have maintained the significant diplomatic influence the United States at that time possessed in Iraq— influence that had been and still was essential in guaranteeing Iraq's nascent political system, reassuring Iraqi leaders they could resolve their differences peacefully and politically, despite their mistrust of one another, and checking the authoritarian and sectarian tendencies of Prime Minister Maliki and his allies.

The administration's failure in Iraq has been further compounded by its