

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

Mr. MANCHIN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes or until my remarks are complete.

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

THE MIDDLE EAST AND ISIS

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the gravest and most important issue we can debate in Congress. I am here to talk about America's involvement in the Middle East and President Obama's plan to defeat ISIS. Make no mistake, we must defeat and destroy ISIS. But how we destroy them is what we must get right.

I applaud the President for presenting a plan to the American people. I support airstrikes against ISIS. I support providing humanitarian aid. I support cutting off terrorist funding sources. Doing these things has already helped to prevent genocide and has already begun to roll back ISIS's gains in Iraq.

I also support in engaging the world community, but most importantly Turkey and the Arab League nations. Unfortunately, I have not seen signs from the region that tell me we have their full support. This should be an Arab ground war and a U.S. air war, but I cannot and will not support arming or training the Syrian opposition forces. I did not come to this decision easily.

I spoke with military and foreign policy experts. I attended classified briefings and asked questions of this administration—but, most importantly, I studied our history.

We have been at war in that part of the world for the past 13 years. If money and military might could have made a difference, it would have by now.

In Iraq alone, we spent the better part of 8 years training the Iraqi police and military force of a 280,000-person army at the cost of \$20 billion to the American people—\$20 billion. The first time they had to step up and defend their country, their people, and their way of life, what did they do? They folded in the face of ISIS, abandoning their equipment and facilities to the enemy.

I ask my colleagues and the President, why do we think that training the rebels would turn out any differently?

In West Virginia, we understand the definition of insanity. We get it.

The first principle of war is to know your enemy. And we certainly know our enemy.

ISIS is a barbaric terrorist with no respect for humanity, and they deserve to die. I have seen the videos and, like every American, I was disgusted and outraged.

But as it is most important to know your enemy, it is equally important to know your allies—and I am not confident we know who our allies are.

To illustrate that point, I refer my colleagues to press reports that moderate Syrian opposition forces sold American journalist Steven Sotloff to ISIS, who beheaded him and put the video on the Internet. Are those people our allies?

Who are our other allies in this fight? As of today, we have only hints of military support from Arab countries that themselves face a greater threat from ISIS than any one of us.

Syria's neighbors have the technical ability and the financial resources to support and train the Syrian opposition forces. If that is the correct course of action we should take, they have the wherewithal to do it.

In the 1991 Iraq war, we had commitments from our allies around the world, but most importantly from the Arab community. We had a total buy-in. I know Secretary of State Kerry has been working tirelessly to build a similar coalition and to recruit support from Iraq's neighbors, because it is their neighborhood and theirs to defend. I hope it is successful because, as our intelligence community has said repeatedly, ISIS could soon become a direct threat to the United States of America. But I strongly believe that if our military arms and trains Syrian rebels, we will be involving ourselves in a ground conflict that we cannot resolve where potentially everyone involved is our enemy.

To my mind, the reasons not to arm Syrian rebels today are very clear. No. 1, first, the weapons we give to moderate opposition may not remain in their hands. If my colleagues have seen the videos of ISIS shipping U.S. Army humvees and MRAPs out of Iraq that we gave to the Iraqi Army, they will understand what I mean.

No. 2, I have seen no evidence that the Syrian rebels we plan to train and arm will remain committed to American goals or our interests. The vast majority of national level Syrian rebel groups are Islamist, none of whom are interested in allying with the United States. This is not to their best interests—and not in their interest—and none of whom we should be associating with.

Further, the opposition fighters we will train care more about overthrowing Assad's regime than they do about defeating ISIS. Assad is evil, make no mistake about it, but he is not a threat to America. If the moderate opposition has to choose between defeating Assad and defeating ISIS, why do we believe—think about this—they will choose our priority over their own? Why would we even think that? How do we know they won't join forces with ISIS if it helps them overthrow Assad, their main objective?

No. 3, authorizing military support for Syrian rebels will inextricably draw us into a civil war we have no way to end—and we have seen this picture unfold before. Our fight is against ISIS and the Islamist terrorist groups that threaten the United States. A limit of

that fight should be doing what we need to do to protect Americans and to prevent genocide. Every further step we take from that basic principle of protecting Americans and preventing genocide takes us back down the road of Middle Eastern nation-building. That means we should support others with counterterrorism forces, intelligence gathering, air power, and diplomatic efforts—and it means stopping the flow of illicit oil, money, and fighters across Syria's borders. We do not need to arm and train Syrian rebels to protect Americans.

I would ask my colleagues to consider America's history of intervention in the Middle East. It has not been a successful one. Interventions have failed in Lebanon, Somalia, Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan is on the brink of failure.

What did we learn from our actions? Certainly not that going into Muslim countries to restore order or restore democracy is a winning strategy for us.

I have been very clear: We have every right to and we must—we must—defend ourselves and protect American citizens and interests against terrorists anywhere in the world. I again voice my strong support for the counterterrorism efforts already ongoing to protect Americans, but we have proven by blood and treasure already spent that we have not made a difference with American boots on the ground in this part of the world.

Some have used the examples of our garrisons in Germany, Japan, Korea, and the Balkans as examples of where the United States successfully established the rule of law with residual military forces, but such comparisons have little basis in history. Once our mission was achieved and occupation began, our troops did not face the threat of violence from the same people we had just defended and liberated.

Others have said if we had kept a residual force in Iraq that ISIS would never have taken hold, and I respectfully disagree. How can I fault a President for pulling troops out after 8 years, billions spent, and thousands of lives lost, with no end in sight? Again we trained in Iraq a military of 280,000 persons at a cost of \$20 billion, and when they faced their first test, they folded. That was a fraction of the total cost of our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I wish to give a rundown of where we stand today. In Iraq, conservatively, we have spent \$818 billion. In Afghanistan, we have spent \$747 billion, and that is continuing to grow. The total cost of our recent wars: \$1.6 trillion, and that is growing. That doesn't include the cost of long-term care of wounded veterans, over 50,000.

But the cost in money is nothing compared to the cost of lives. In Iraq, 4,400 dead, 36,000 wounded. In Afghanistan and still counting, 2,200 dead and 21,000 wounded.

I know my vote comes with a price. I know that. It is my understanding that

the same vote we make to train and fund the Syrian opposition forces will also be one to pass a CR to fund our government. I do not believe we should be forced to decide between funding our government and arming Syrian rebels in the same vote.

We should be ashamed for failing to pass appropriations bills to finance government operations for the fiscal year that starts 2 weeks from now, and more ashamed that for the sake of expediency—expediency because of an election coming up—that we are using a stopgap continuing resolution as a vehicle for authorizing major military activity that will have repercussions for generations to come.

Asking us to make this choice is a disservice to the American people. But if that is a decision I am forced to make—and I will say if that is a decision I am forced to make—it is one I am committed to making. I understand my vote will likely not be the deciding vote, but even if it were, I would still cast the same vote. I believe these votes should be separate and debated. We owe that to the American people. We have this time to do it. I believe with all my heart we have more than enough time to do this. I am prepared, as some of my colleagues, to stay in session so we can give the American people the debate and transparent transition they deserve.

We must learn from our past mistakes and we must not repeat them. I believe our country deserves this debate. Let me make it clear, I believe ISIS is a grave threat to the region and could become a direct threat to the United States. We must confront and defeat them. I just do not believe that arming the Syrian opposition forces is the correct approach, because I can foresee a Senate debate a few years from now—not that far off—I can see this coming about how to defeat the next group of Islamist terrorists we helped to train and install.

I have not come to this decision easily, and I know it comes with consequences, but I believe the people of West Virginia sent me to the Senate to make tough decisions and vote to do what is best for not only all West Virginians but for every American.

I yield the floor and 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. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE EROSION OF THE SENATE

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, it brings me no pleasure to make the remarks I feel compelled to make today. I think it is important for us to understand how we, the Senate of the United States, are operating.

The Senate—the legislative body heretofore aided by the late Senator Robert C. Byrd as the second great senate in history, the first being the Roman Senate—is being eroded beyond recognition by the tactics utilized by Senate Majority Leader REID and those who support him in that process.

Today is Constitution Day. It was Senator Byrd who moved legislation to declare today Constitution Day. Under that Constitution, there are two bodies in the Congress, the House and the Senate, and the Senate has always been known as the body where great debates are held, with an open ability to amend and discuss, and the great issues of the day are laid out. That is what we are about.

But the Senate has changed dramatically since I have been in the Senate, some 18 years, and not for the better—not for the better of the American people. It might be good for politicians, but it is not good for the American people and it is not good for the public interest, in my view.

As has been happening time and again, we are once again today, at night on the eleventh hour, being asked to vote for a spending bill before we recess. We have to recess, you see. Why? So Senators can go home to campaign, but we are being paid, whether we are here or back home or vacationing or whatever. Why don't we stay a few days longer if necessary? Oh, no. We have to get out of Washington and go back home and campaign.

This continuing resolution, covering a massive amount of spending that no Member can fully comprehend at this late hour and nobody can meaningfully analyze, scrutinize or investigate—once again, we are being asked to fund the entire government of the United States in one catch-all bill, with no opportunity for a single amendment. There is no way to improve the legislation or to engage in meaningful consideration of our financial status.

Aren't we facing a crisis financially? Hasn't the Congressional Budget Office told us we are on an unsustainable financial path? Yes. Are we going to discuss that at all? No. We are going to bring up this bill, vote it through, and go home and campaign.

This denies the American people the opportunity to know what is being passed and to analyze and hold their elected representatives accountable for their actions. So the American people can't comprehend or study what is behind this massive bill either.

Once again, as a tactic, this bill is being rushed through under the threat of a government shutdown. Without a funding mechanism, the government would shut down October 1 if we don't pass an appropriations bill to fund it because the Government of the United States cannot operate and spend a dime Congress hasn't appropriated. That is a fundamental constitutional power.

Yes, there is a problem out there. How did it happen that we are getting

toward the end of the session and nothing has been done? I will talk about that.

Why is this happening? Is it because we don't have time? No, it is not because we don't have time. The reality—and I will say this, and I have not been contradicted on it by any Member of this Senate, to my knowledge. It is not a lack of time. We haven't done anything this week or last week, and we have next week and the next week if need be. We can vote 20 times a day. It doesn't take a lot of time to vote. People can have their ideas to improve legislation and bring them up and argue for them and get an up-or-down vote, yes or no.

So why is this happening? The purpose is to protect Members from having to cast votes that their constituents might disagree with, to protect them from being placed on record one way or the other on important issues facing the Nation. That is the problem. It is politics first, sad to say. It just is.

We have not voted on a single appropriations bill in the Senate this year, not one. Not 1 of the 12 appropriations bills that are required to fund our government each year has come before the Senate. Committees are being bypassed, secret deals rule the day, and millions of Americans are thereby robbed of their ability to observe and participate in the legislative process. They are denied the ability to write their Senators and say: I hear you have an amendment coming up on this and so. Vote for it or vote against it. That is all being eliminated in this process.

It has been so long since we followed the regular order, I think it is necessary for me to share with the people and our colleagues what is supposed to happen and what is not happening.

Each year Congress is supposed to pass a budget resolution which outlines the spending goals and limits for the upcoming year. Then, based on the spending levels contained in the budget resolution, the individual authorization committees are to report out authorization bills. For example, they are to review the Defense Department. We don't do that anymore. They are to review the Defense Department. We normally do a Defense authorization bill—but it hasn't been done this year—to authorize certain spending and policy changes, utilizing the expertise of the members of the committees to shape where the spending is supposed to go, laying out priorities, setting and making decisions about what we can afford and what we can't afford, evaluating whether programs are effective, to serve the citizens of the United States.

Isn't that what we are supposed to do? This is the way we eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse. This is the way we stop it.

After the authorization committees do their work, the Appropriations Committee actually is the one to fund the government. The subcommittees of the Appropriations Committee are tasked with producing appropriations bills for