The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

COMMENDING SENATOR INHOFE AND SENATOR ISAKSON

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, before I talk about some of the issues I want to raise this evening on the floor, I wish to make a quick comment about having the opportunity to watch two outstanding Members of this body: Senator INHOFE, whom I happen to sit on the EPW Committee with—and all the great work he has done this year, TSCA, the highway bill—and then watching Senator ISAKSON as well, chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I have the honor of sitting on that committee. He just went over the great work he has been leading on in terms of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

It has been a real honor to sit and watch Chairman INHOFE and Chairman ISAKSON, two amazing Members of this body. As a new Senator, it has been a privilege to be on both of the committees and watch their work. It is a real pleasure. Thank you.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I know there is a lot going on today: the spending bill, the budget. They are very critical to our country. There is certainly a lot of focus on that. A lot of people are spending a lot of time, myself included, digging into that agreement, but the news yesterday on Iran also deserves our attention. Reuters reported that Iran, according to the U.N. Security Council panel of experts, violated U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929 when it tested a ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead in October. They said it was a violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution. They are looking at—and it is probably likely, what you see here—the Iranians also launched another ballistic missile in November. That is also another likely violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution.

I made some remarks on the floor a few days ago about Iran and about the nuclear deal. I reminded my colleagues that one of the selling points by the President and by Secretary Kerry about this deal was they were making the case that it was likely to improve Iran's behavior: bring them into the community of nations, get them to behave more like a normal country and not the world's largest sponsor of terrorism, which it currently is.

Since the signing of the nuclear deal, which we debated on this floor, Iran's behavior has only gotten worse. Examples are very numerous. Leaders of the country continue to hold rallies, chanting: ''Death to America,'' ''Death to Israel.'' Iran continues to fund Hezbollah—one of its terrorist proxies around the world—hundreds of millions of dollars. It violated U.N. Security Council resolutions that prevent the Quds Force commander, General Soleimani, from traveling. He actually traveled to Russia to meet with Mr. Putin to talk about arms trade, in likely a violation of another security council resolution.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recently said that up to 2,000 Iranian troops are in Syria helping to keep the Assad regime in power, working with the Russians on that.

Something that we can never forget, probably the worst outrage that we have seen, all since the signing of the nuclear agreement a couple of months ago, is that in a direct affront to the United States and our citizens, Iran is still holding five Americans against their will. They took another American hostage since the signing of this agreement. One of them is a marine. One of them is a pastor. One of them is a Washington Post reporter. They are all fellow American citizens.

As we prepare for the holidays, when families come together, when friends come together, the President and Secretary Kerry should be working day and night on the phone, every instrument of American power, to try and release these Americans, but that certainly doesn't seem to be happening.

All of this has taken place since the signing of the agreement. All of this is proof enough that the Iran nuclear deal certainly didn't change Iran's behavior for the better. To the contrary, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Obama administration's deal with Iran has only emboldened Iran to take more provocative action against the United States, our citizens, and our allies.

Iran's leaders are testing us. It is clear they are testing us right now. How we respond to these tests is critical. As noted, Iran's missile launches on October 11 clearly violated U.N. Security Council Resolution 1921. The one on November 21 likely did as well. What does this mean? What does this mean for the current Iran nuclear deal that was recently signed? What are the implications on moving forward with that deal? What are the implications of this activity on moving forward with that deal?

I believe a strong argument can be made that these actions by Iran mean they are already violating the spirit and the intent of the nuclear agreement that this body just voted on a few months ago—already.

Former Secretary of State and former U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton actually predicted this just last week when she stated: They are going to violate it. They are going to violate the nuclear agreement, and when they do, we need to respond quickly and very harshly.

That was the former Secretary of State, former Member of this body. I think Secretary Clinton was right on this.

President Obama himself indicated that there is definitely a tie between the Iranian nuclear deal from his administration and Iran's use of ballistic missile activities. As a matter of fact, the President in a press conference clearly stated that the prohibitions on these activities were part of the nuclear agreement, when in July of this year, after the signing of the agreement, President Obama stated:

> What I said to our negotiators was . . . let's press for a longer extension of the arms embargo and the ballistic missile prohibitions. And we got that. We got five years in which, under this new agreement, arms coming in and out of Iran are prohibited, and we got eight years for the respective ballistic missiles.

This is the President talking about his nuclear agreement.

To look at another tie between ballistic missiles and the nuclear agreement, you need to look at the U.N. Security Council that implemented the Iran nuclear deal. That is U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231. That is replacing some of the other U.N. security council resolutions, and it is the legal framework for the nuclear deal that this body debated and approved. Here is what U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231 states: ''Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons . . . until the date eight years after the JCPOA adoption day.''

Again, plain English of the connection. The U.N. Security Council Resolution—that is the international framework for the nuclear deal—says: no ballistic missile activity by Iran.

Yet now we know in no uncertain terms because our U.N. Ambassador, Ambassador Power, just stated that this launch in October was what that U.N. Security Council resolution said Iran couldn't do. She said that launch was inherently capable of delivering a nuclear weapon. Those are a lot of U.N. Security Council resolutions. That is a lot of activity.

Where does that leave us with regard to the Iran nuclear deal? It is obviously clear that Iran just violated U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929. That has already been stated by the panel of experts, by Ambassador Power, and the language of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231—the implementation of the U.N. resolution of the Iranian U.N. deal.

This is what I mean when I say that Iran is already violating the spirit and the intent of the Iran nuclear deal. The deal that this body debated a couple of months ago is already being violated by the Iranians.

What should we do? Some of us have already taken action. Thirty-five Members of this body yesterday sent a letter to the President—written by my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator AYOTTE—and it said basically: Mr. President, given these ballistic missile activities, given that Iran is violating U.N. Security Council resolutions that relate to the nuclear agreement, you should not be lifting sanctions.

The Obama administration is talking about lifting sanctions as part of the

nuclear agreement as early as next month—tens of billions of dollars to the world's largest terrorist regime—sanctions are going to be lifted to allow them to continue their provocative activities against the United States, our allies, and our citizens.

What we are saying, one-third of the Members of this body, is that we shouldn't be doing that. The President should heed the advice of Senator AYOTTE's letter. Additionally, I think a strong argument—and people need to look at this issue—that can be made about Iran's recent behavior is that we cannot lift these sanctions pursuant to the terms of the nuclear deal. The nuclear agreement that was debated in this body states that before sanctions are lifted on implementation day, Iran must be in accord with U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231, which among other things calls upon Iran not to undertake activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

Do you see how they are related? The nuclear agreement that this body agreed to, the implementation plan of the nuclear agreement, paragraph 34(3) says that Iran has to be in accord with this provision in order for sanctions to be lifted.

Iran is not in accord with this provision. The U.N. has said that. Ambassador Power said that. The bottom line is, if Iran is already violating this U.N. Security Council resolution, then under paragraph 34(3) of the implementation plan of the nuclear deal by the Obama administration, sanctions shouldn't be lifted.

Here is how the President put it when he was selling the deal. ''If Iran violates this deal, the sanctions we imposed that have helped cripple the Iranian economy—the sanctions that helped make this deal possible—would snap back into place promptly.''

I agree that is what we should be doing, but here is the key point. The President doesn't need to wait for the sanctions to snap back. He can and he should take action now, before it is too late, before billions of dollars flood into Iran—the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism.

That is why over one-third of the Members of this body wrote the President yesterday. I urge my colleagues—particularly my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who I know are concerned about these issues because I have had discussions with a number of them—that they should be writing the President as well. They should be telling the President the same thing: Mr. President, Iran is violating the agreement; don't lift the sanctions. He can and should act now.

The President should not lift sanctions against Iran. He needs to go back and reread his own nuclear agreement, and he needs to heed the advice of his former Secretary of State to ''act quickly and harshly against Iran'' when it violates the agreement by not allowing them access to tens of billions of dollars. The President needs to do that now.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

MAINTAINING AMERICA'S DEFENSE

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a man who has dutifully served our Nation as a public servant for more than 30 years—Mr. John B. Johns. John will retire from his role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Maintenance Policy and Programs at the end of this year. We will miss his leadership, his tenacity in tackling the impossible, and his courage in the face of adversity.

I have had the privilege of knowing John for several years and have always been amazed at his commitment to our country and his devotion to our military. In his current role, he is responsible for the oversight of the Department of Defense's maintenance program that exceeds an annual budget of $80 billion. During his distinguished career, John has been deployed twice—first to Iraq in 2010, where he served as the director of the training and advisory mission and the director of logistics for the Iraqi Security Forces; and second to Afghanistan in 2013, where he served as the executive director of Afghan National Security Forces Sustainment for the International Security Assistance Force.

One of John's primary duties in his current position is to host the annual Department of Defense Maintenance Symposium that recognizes excellence in maintenance activities within the Armed Services and the Coast Guard. During this event, the Department recognizes leaders and organizations for the superior service they render to promote the readiness of the U.S. military. I wanted to read the remarks that John offered at this year's symposium last week. The title of John's address is ''Maintaining America's Defense.'' His words are as follows:

''For seven years this community has been very kind to me; you have been gracious and patient as I spoke from this stage. I now ask you to indulge me one last time as I speak of maintaining America's defense.

Brave warriors have fought and died, and their brothers and sisters stand watch today, in harm's way, to both secure and maintain peace, to deter and defeat forces that are committed to a future fundamentally different than the one you and I envision. The world is a complex, dangerous, and unstable place with evolving threats, both new and old. The reality is we are facing skilled, determined enemies that would just as soon strike at us as they would take a breath. They clearly do not share the same view on humanity, nor the value of life, as we do. This environment demands the flexibility, agility and lethality that only our United States Military can provide.

From the first shots that signaled the birth of our country, men at arms have served as an instrument of state, and their strength, as individuals and as a force, have enabled and secured both victory and peace. Today, the presence of United States Forces, controlling the battle space, conducting strike operations with the ability to see but remain unseen, to dominate the land, sea, and air, to rain fire and destruction, provide clarity to all those that contemplate harm to us or our interests. That aggression will not be tolerated. But, as you know, we have not always acted properly, nor responded with appropriate speed, to events in the world that have demanded our attention. We make many mistakes, and it is true we are slow to anger. But, once our limit has been breached and restraint abandoned, there is nothing on this planet, nor has there ever been, like the hell unleashed from coiled fury of the United States Military.

You should all be proud of the role you play in maintaining that capability—most recently, maintaining readiness of our forces over a decade of continuous combat, in two complex theaters, in unforgiving environments, while maintaining a credible presence throughout the rest of the world. You enabled this, and for that, you should be proud. All of you in this room know a ship not ready to sail, or an aircraft not ready to fly, has no value. And, since we have had the need for weapons, we have had the need for those that maintain them. This eternal bond is a covenant, a sacred promise, between those that generate readiness and those that apply it, and we seal this covenant with a commitment to excellence. All of you in this room, and those you represent, should be rightfully proud, an embodiment of this covenant and commitment, reminding any who mistakenly underestimate the power and will of our United States Military that we are capable of striking with speed and violence.

So where, then, should we expect the approach of danger; what will be its origin? I suggest our greatest enemy, our greatest threat, is not Russia; our greatest enemy is not ISIS, ISIL, DEASH, or whatever we are calling them now; it's not China, it's not North Korea, and it's certainly not climate change. Yes, of course, they are all threats; I would never say they're not. But they are born of something much more fundamental. I suggest our greatest threat is the dangerous mix of mediocrity, poor judgment, and tolerance—here, on our ground.

In his Lyceum address, Lincoln said, 'Shall we expect some transatlantic