

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question occurs on adoption of the resolution.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 38 Leg.]

YEAS—96

Alexander	Flake	Murphy
Ayotte	Franken	Murray
Baldwin	Gardner	Nelson
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Paul
Bennet	Graham	Perdue
Blumenthal	Grassley	Peters
Blunt	Hatch	Portman
Booker	Heinrich	Reed
Boozman	Heitkamp	Reid
Brown	Heller	Risch
Burr	Hirono	Roberts
Cantwell	Hoeven	Rounds
Capito	Inhofe	Rubio
Cardin	Isakson	Sasse
Carper	Johnson	Schatz
Casey	Kaine	Schumer
Cassidy	King	Scott
Coats	Kirk	Sessions
Cochran	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Collins	Lankford	Shelby
Coons	Leahy	Stabenow
Corker	Lee	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cotton	Markey	Thune
Crapo	McCain	Tillis
Daines	McCaskill	Toomey
Donnelly	McConnell	Udall
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Enzi	Merkley	Warren
Ernst	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Boxer	Sanders
Cruz	Vitter

The resolution (S. Res. 377) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the preamble is agreed to and the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of February 29, 2016, under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from South Carolina and I be permitted to engage in a colloquy.

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

PRESIDENT'S SYRIAN POLICY AND RUSSIA

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, briefly, the Senator from South Carolina and I discussed this announcement that Russia will begin withdrawing some military forces from Syria. It obviously signals Vladimir Putin's belief that he has bombed and killed enough of the opponents of the murderous Assad regime to assure Assad's survival.

For 4 years, this administration—this President—stood by as the Assad regime slaughtered nearly half a million people in Syria. Then, when Assad appeared weak, it watched as Putin intervened militarily and protected his brutal regime, in a move that the President described as Putin going into a "quagmire." Well, apparently now Vladimir Putin is leaving that "quagmire," and he is leaving a solid Bashar Assad in a position of strength. He is leaving thousands of dead moderate opposition that he has indiscriminately bombed, and the United States has their begging bowl out, asking and pleading that they somehow reach some agreement again in Geneva.

It is really embarrassing to watch this President and this Secretary of State as they continue to beg Vladimir Putin and his stooge Lavrov as they continue to place Russia in a position of influence they have not had since Anwar Sadat threw them out of Egypt in 1973.

They now have a major role to play in the Middle East. They have a military base. They have a naval base. They have upgraded airfields, and they have now solidified Bashar Assad's position in power.

Is there anybody who believes that Russia will agree to an arrangement that Bashar Assad or his stooge doesn't remain in power? Of course not. Aren't we tired of begging Vladimir Putin? Aren't we tired of watching the United States and the young men we trained and equipped being bombed by Vladimir Putin and killed and murdered? Don't we sometimes grow a little tired of that? It is no wonder that the United States of America has no standing and no influence in the region.

I don't often quote from the New York Times. I would ask my colleague if he has seen this:

The Russian move may . . . be a reflection that Mr. Putin is now supremely confident in Mr. Assad's renewed stability and can afford to step back a bit and play statesman. Mr. Putin has achieved many of his main goals: bringing Russia back to center stage as a global power; preventing, on principle, regime change by outside powers, particularly Western ones; gaining a stronger foothold in Syria; picking off Russian jihadists on the Syrian battlefield; and strengthening Mr. Assad.

I wish to ask my friend from South Carolina: Isn't it obvious what is going to happen next; and that is, an increase in fighting in eastern Ukraine, more Ukrainians slaughtered while we refuse to give them defensive weapons, but just sufficient amount of violence and killing to prevent the United States of America or the Europeans from taking any significant action? Indeed, won't there now be pressure on the part of the special interests and the industrialists, particularly in Germany, to lift the sanctions on Vladimir Putin?

Mr. GRAHAM. I think you are right, I say to Senator McCain.

Let's look at what our military leaders say rather than just look at what political people think. General Dunford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a hearing you chaired today was asked: What is Putin up to? What do you think he is trying to do here?

He said: Well, all I can tell you is the reason he came into Syria was to destroy ISIL and help fight ISIL. He has proven that he did not do that. He didn't try to do that.

So what General Dunford said was that basically Putin lied about why he came to Syria. If he is leaving Syria, the job against ISIL is far from done. But I think you nailed it, I say to Senator McCain. The job of propping up Assad has been accomplished.

So what General Dunford said is that the reason that Putin came into Syria was not to destroy ISIL but to help his stooge, his puppet Assad. He believes he achieved such military superiority on behalf of Assad by bombing the people we trained that he can now leave.

So at the end of the day, he is not leaving. A naval base and an air force base will be in Syria. He said: We are withdrawing our forces, but, of course, we will have a naval presence and an air base.

Here is what I would say. If he needs to help Assad in the future, he will. Geneva has become a joke. There is no way you are going to negotiate a successful agreement when Assad is backed by Russia and Iran. The opposition has been abandoned by the United States and the free world. The Russian President has bombed the people the American President trained to take Assad out.

Mr. MCCAIN. What does the Senator from South Carolina think that does to our reputation when we arm, train, and equip young men, send them in to fight, ostensibly against ISIS or Bashar Assad—although, in this case ISIS—and we stand by and watch the Russians slaughter them from the air?

Mr. GRAHAM. I think it sends a signal that you can't rely upon us. You have two training programs—one by the CIA and one by the Department of Defense. The people trained outside the Department of Defense have been wholesale slaughtered by the Russian air attacks, and we have done nothing about it.

What does the region say? We have two enemies—Assad and ISIL. Our unwillingness to confront Assad has created a sense of abandonment in the entire region. Assad is a puppet of Iran. Iran is the mortal enemy of the Sunni Arab states.

So what has the President accomplished here? He said Assad must go. He trained people to help take him down. Russia came in and said Assad will not go. They have attacked the people we have trained, and we basically have abandoned the free Syrian opposition.

Now we are in Geneva talking about a peace agreement where the whole balance now is in Assad's favor. Does anybody really believe there is military jeopardy for Assad? And without his being in jeopardy, how do you get an agreement the Syrian people can live with? If Assad or his henchmen stay in power, how do you ever end the war in Syria?

So what we have accomplished is that we have given the Russians more influence in the Mideast than at any time since 1973. We have allowed Iran basically to dictate the terms in Damascus. We have jeopardized our relationship with our Arab partners. We have put in question Americans' reliability in terms of the people inside of Syria.

The Syrian policy of Barack Obama has done enormous damage. Without Russia being involved, none of this would have happened.

Mr. MCCAIN. The tragedy of all of this, I would say to my friend, is that when the United States of America was required to stand up because of the commitment of the President of the United States if the Bashar Assad regime had used chemical weapons and slaughtered—it is the gruesome pictures that you and I have seen—and then backed off, that was one of the seminal moments that American credibility disappeared. Here we are now still refusing to arm, train, and equip young men to fight against Bashar Assad and, in fact, making them pledge that they would only fight against ISIS. It is not ISIS that is barrel-bombing them. It is not ISIS that is dropping chemical weapons. It is not ISIS that has brought in thousands and tortured and beaten and killed. ISIS is our enemy. ISIS is evil. But to somehow excuse the behavior of Bashar Assad with the Russians' indiscriminate bombing is one of the most disgraceful chapters in American history in my view.

Mr. GRAHAM. To build on this, several years ago Russia took by force Crimea. This was not a fair election. It is pretty hard to have a fair election when there is a Russian tank parked in front of your yard. Good luck saying you don't want to go to Russia.

We have done nothing other than sanction Russia. Russia is still engaged in provocative behavior. We told him not to go into Crimea. We told him not to dismember Ukraine. He did. He is

stronger, not weaker. We told him not to use military force to help Assad, who is the Butcher of Damascus. He did. We pleaded with him not to attack non-ISIL targets. He did. He destroyed the opposition to Assad. Russia is in league with Iran. So the biggest winner of Russia's involvement on the ground in Syria has been the Iranians, which is the most destabilizing group of people in the entire Mideast. The biggest loser has been the free Syrian opposition, the Syrian people themselves, and close behind is the American reputation in the region.

I want the administration to know that your handling of Syria has been a disaster on multiple levels. It has emboldened Iran. It has made Russia stronger. We are losing credibility in the region at a time when the region needs leadership. If you go to Geneva and you close out a peace deal that is a joke that allows Assad or somebody—Bob Assad, not Bashar Assad—to stay in power, if you allow a peace agreement where the Iranians control Damascus and Russia has a naval and air force base and more influence than we do, what have you accomplished?

I hope and pray the administration will stop this insane desire to bring Syria to a conclusion where the conclusion is going to make the whole region subject to blowing up. A successful conclusion is not having Iran being the dominant force inside of Syria, Russia having more influence, an air base and a naval base, and the Syrian people losing the ability to replace their tormenter, and ISIL having a magnet for future recruitment, which is an Iranian-backed Assad. That is not a successful outcome.

What do you think, I ask Senator MCCAIN?

Mr. MCCAIN. For the last 5 years, we have been writing a shameful chapter in American history. To sum all of this up, leading from behind doesn't work. If America leads from behind, somebody else is going to be in front. If the United States leaves conflicts and creates vacuums, then bad things happen.

Look at a map of the Middle East in January of 2009, when this President came to the Presidency of the United States, and look at that map now—the way ISIS has metastasized, the way hundreds of thousands have been murdered and millions are on the march as refugees. We still have apologists for this leading from behind, a policy which is described as “Don't do stupid stuff.” This is the result of leadership that has left the scene in a way that we have not seen since the 1930s, in the days of Neville Chamberlain and “peace in our time.”

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. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

IRAN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, last week the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC—the hard-line military force that answers only to Iran's Supreme Leader and is committed to the preservation of Iran's revolutionary regime—launched a number of ballistic missiles, in clear violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. These missile launches are profoundly disturbing and suggest a regime that is content on continuing to destabilize the region and threaten our vital allies and its neighbors. They don't technically violate the terms of last summer's nuclear agreement, but they do serve as a vital reminder that Iran remains a revolutionary regime that does not respect world opinion and does not share our values or interests.

America and our allies must seek every opportunity to push back on Iran's aggressive behavior—especially behavior such as this that is outside the parameters of the nuclear deal—by enforcing existing sanctions on Iran's illegal ballistic missile tests, its ongoing human rights abuses, and its support for terrorism across the Middle East and the world.

Another critical way the international community can demonstrate we are serious about holding Iran accountable is by aggressively enforcing the terms of the nuclear deal. Today I will discuss a key element of enforcing that deal: fully funding the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, the world's nuclear watchdog, which is responsible for monitoring Iran's compliance with the deal. The case for providing robust, sustainable funding for the IAEA is further strengthened by a second topic I will discuss, which is Iran's continued human rights abuses.

Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal so far does not mean that its government intends to embrace the international community or heed the call of the Iranian people for greater democracy. In fact, I believe the actions of the IRGC and Iran's hard-line conservative leaders indicate that the Iranian regime intends to continue to repress dissent, block democratic reforms, incite anti-Semitism, and violate basic human rights.

Mr. President, in a speech to the United Nations in December of 1953, President Eisenhower proclaimed American support for a new international organization tasked with putting nuclear technology “into the hands of those who will know how to strip its military casing and adapt it to the arts of peace.”

Since its founding in 1957, the IAEA has undertaken a broad array of responsibilities—from promoting international nonproliferation efforts to supporting peaceful nuclear power—but none more vital than maintaining its safeguards program, which provides