

critical it is that we have a team in place that can be part of the team that protects this Nation.

As Senator KLOBUCHAR said, Azita Raji has been waiting over a year since she was nominated. She went through the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously. Nobody objected. Sam Heins was nominated almost a year ago. He is nominated to be U.S. Ambassador to Norway.

Again, this is not about just these two individuals; this is also about the message we are sending to two of our best partners and allies, Sweden and Norway. Both of these countries have been part of the anti-ISIL coalition fighting with us against the terrorists. Sweden has been on the frontlines of the refugee crisis, taking in thousands of refugees in Europe. As we think about the strains that the European Union is under right now, for us to have failed to put ambassadors in two of our most important allies is unforgivable.

Yesterday I said it was in 1914 that Norway had to scramble their F-16 fighters. We know they didn't have F-16 fighters in 1914. It was 2014. So a little over a year ago, Norway, which is a NATO ally, scrambled its F-16 fighters 74 times to intercept Russian warplanes.

As we think about the threats from Russian aggression, Sweden and Norway are right there. They are on the frontlines. Norway has committed to participate in NATO's missile defense system. So, again, it is very important as we are looking at our efforts to stop Russian aggression.

Yesterday in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee we were talking about the strains on Europe. We had witnesses for both the majority and the minority who confirmed that our failure to move these nominees on the Senate floor is "an enormous issue," a "disastrous policy," and sends the message that Washington does not "care about European security"—both minority and majority witnesses—even arguing that the United States does not have "players on the field."

Not only are there national security implications, but, as the Senator from Minnesota pointed out, vacancies in Sweden and Norway mean that some \$11.3 billion in U.S. exports lack a strong champion in-country.

I hope the Senator from Texas—who is out running for President—will come back or will lift his hold so we can send the message that we should be sending to our European allies about how important they are and how strongly we want to support what is happening in those countries.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to move two other national security nominees.

The first is Ambassador Tom Shannon. He has been nominated to be Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Again, he has been waiting 136 days since being nominated. He also went through the Foreign Relations

Committee without any opposition. He would be responsible for working with Europeans on the implementation of the Iran agreement, on coordinating the G7 to combat Russian aggression, as well as providing daily oversight and direction to all the Department's regional bureaus. He is a career Foreign Service officer who has served in five administrations, two Democratic and three Republican.

At this time I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: the nomination of Ambassador Tom Shannon to be Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Calendar No. 375; that the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. On behalf of the junior Senator from Texas, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Again, I am hopeful the junior Senator from Texas is going to do what he should have done all along, which is lift his hold and allow both the Ambassadors to Sweden and Norway and Ambassador Shannon to move forward.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, finally, I want to ask unanimous consent to move Adam Szubin, who has been nominated to be Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes. He has also been waiting almost a year. He is somebody who Senator SHELBY, chairman of the Banking Committee, has said is eminently qualified, but the Banking Committee still has not voted to move his nomination to the Senate floor.

His position is very critical because he would lead the policy, enforcement, regulatory, and intelligence functions of the Treasury Department. They are aimed at identifying and disrupting the lines of financial support to international terrorist organizations to a whole range of other bad actors.

Next week on the Senate floor we are supposed to take up sanctions on North Korea. How can we in good faith tell the American people we are going to enforce sanctions on North Korea when we haven't been willing to fill the position that is responsible for doing that enforcement? It belies understanding that we are not going to move forward.

Again, this is a position that I know is supported by the Foreign Relations Committee. The Republican chair of the Foreign Relations Committee has been very supportive of moving Adam Szubin's nomination, just as he has been supportive of moving the two Ambassadors, of moving Ambassador Shannon.

This is not a partisan issue. This is an issue about what we are doing to ensure the national security of this country. It is unfortunate we have rules in the Senate that allow one person to hold things up for an indefinite period of time when the national security of the country is at stake.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session and the Banking Committee be discharged from further consideration of PN371, the nomination of Adam Szubin to be Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes; that the Senate proceed to its consideration and vote without intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. On behalf of the senior Senator from Alabama, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Again, it is disappointing that the senior Senator from Alabama isn't here to talk about his concerns about Adam Szubin and why he is still on hold in the Banking Committee and that we haven't heard from the majority leader in the Senate about the importance of moving not only Adam Szubin's nomination but these other nominations that are critical as we make sure we do what we need to, to protect this country.

I am disappointed, but as Senator KLOBUCHAR said, we will be back.

I yield the floor.

Madam President, 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. NELSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ANNUAL NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I want to chronicle for the Senate and to make a part of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD that nearly 5,000 people gathered this morning for the annual National Prayer Breakfast with the President, members of the Cabinet, members of the Joint Chiefs, most of the Diplomatic Corps, and a lot of the Members of Congress.

The national breakfast is sponsored by the Senate prayer group that meets on Wednesday morning and the House

prayer group that meets on Thursday morning. This year it was the House's turn to be the cochairs. We do have cochairs in the House and the Senate prayer group, one from each party. In the case of the Senate prayer group, we were ably represented, as they spoke from the podium, by Senator BOOZMAN of Arkansas and Senator KAINE of Virginia. They will be the cochairmen of the breakfast next year.

It was the eighth time that President Obama has spoken. This Senator feels it was the best speech at the Prayer Breakfast I have heard President Obama give. It was one of the best speeches that this Senator, after attending Prayer Breakfasts for over three decades, has ever heard. He quoted the Scriptures from the writings of Paul which say that our faith can keep us from fear. The President illustrated that throughout so much of his remarks.

During his closing remarks, he told a story that he had heard a week or so ago, and I wish to share that story here on the Senate floor. It was about a U.S. Army sergeant whose entire unit had been captured by the Nazis during World War II. While he was in the POW camp, a Nazi colonel told the sergeant, who was the senior official: I want the names of the Jewish soldiers in this unit, and I want them to report to me. The sergeant refused.

The Nazi colonel then decided to assemble all 200 of the sergeant's troops in the POW camp in formation, with the sergeant at the head of the formation. As the colonel approached him again, obviously trying to single out and take and probably try to annihilate the Jewish-American soldiers, he again said, as all the troops were standing there in formation: Sergeant, I want to know who the Jews are. The sergeant replied: Sir, we are all Jews. The colonel then took his pistol out of the holster, cocked it, and put it to the head of the sergeant and made the same demand again. The faith of that Christian sergeant overcame his fear for he was looking out for his troops, and he repeated again: Sir, we are all Jews. The Nazis backed down in that POW camp. The Jewish soldiers were not revealed and, therefore, protected.

That was just one of the many stories that were recounted as the President gave what was an extraordinary conclusion for his last National Prayer Breakfast as President. It is an occasion that so many of us join in on every Wednesday here as we come together and put aside our partisan, regional and any other differences that we have and are unified and joined in prayer. So I thought it fitting, the National Prayer Breakfast having just concluded, that I share this story with the Senate.

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. NELSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TAKATA AIRBAGS

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, we have had quite a running story about the maker of inflatable airbags, which are usually in the steering wheel of an automobile and also over on the passenger side. These airbags have saved countless lives. Yet what we have found is that a manufacturer named Takata from Japan has consistently had different airbags under recall. Well, we just found out yesterday that another one of the automobile manufacturers that uses Takata airbags has now had a further recall just yesterday with 2.2 million of their vehicles. Why? Because of defective airbags.

These bags are supposed to save lives, not harm and kill lives. Yet I remember the lady in Orlando who had a minor fender-bender collision in an intersection, and her air bag deployed. When the police got there, they thought there was a homicide. Her neck was lacerated, and she bled to death. There is a fireman, also near Orlando, who will never be a fireman again because he lost his right eye after the explosion of the air bag. The airbag is defectively manufactured and explodes with such force that the air bag becomes a hand grenade which explodes, and pieces of shrapnel fly into the face of the driver or the passenger.

In the case of the lady in Orlando, her jugular was slashed and she was killed. We have seen a score of these deaths around the country. There was recently another one from a defective Takata airbag in South Carolina. There are now well over 20 million vehicles that have been recalled.

I will be talking to the head of the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration and will be asking all of these questions about safety, such as this: Why are we having the drip, drip, drip of recalls here and recalls there? Why isn't this agency taking an aggressive approach and going after all of these inflaters?

It is expected that it is the explosive compound ammonium nitrate that becomes extremely explosive when exposed to humidity and causes the metal to shred and, therefore, go right into the very driver or the passenger it was intended to save.

This is a matter of grave concern, and now the latest news is that Honda has recalled over 2 million more vehicles nationwide. There have been over 20 million vehicles that have been recalled worldwide. We have to get to the bottom of this and get those defective airbags out of the steering wheels of those cars and replace them with safe airbags.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I would note for Members that we have just concluded the first cloture votes on the Energy Policy Modernization Act. There has been some interesting discussion about where we are in the process and how we might find a path forward toward completion of this very important bipartisan measure—a measure that has, I think, reflected good, strong work throughout the committee process and good, strong work throughout the floor process, but we have yet more work to do. Know that this Senator, along with the ranking member on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, is committed to doing just that, along with the Senators from Michigan as well as many on this side.

So I think the message to those who are wondering what is happening after that noon vote—the word is that work is continuing, and I am optimistic about the outlook for the final passage of the Energy Policy Modernization Act.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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. HOEVEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING MARLOW W. COOK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise with sadness to remark on the passing of an old friend, Kentucky's former U.S. Senator, Marlow W. Cook. Senator Cook served in this Chamber for only a single term, but his political impact in the Commonwealth of Kentucky was substantial. So was his impact on my life.

Marlow Cook gave me my first real opportunity in politics. He gave me a chance to be a State youth chairman in his successful campaign for the U.S. Senate back in 1968. He also gave me an important opportunity in government. He won his election. I came to Washington with him, and I was what they called in those days chief legislative assistant. I think the term we use now is legislative director. I worked for him for 2 years. I recall that time very, very fondly. I can tell you that over the years I remained extremely grateful for the opportunity he gave me to get started.

Marlow Cook was someone who proved that Republican success was possible in a Commonwealth at that time completely dominated by Democrats. That was no easy task when he ran for office, but he succeeded anyway. You might even say he sketched out a political blueprint for victory: launch an improbable campaign for