

night, for months, I have heard my Republican colleagues argue that there is no need to pass legislation to protect Special Counsel Mueller and the Russian probe from President Trump because they have been assured by anonymous White House officials that it will not happen.

President Trump, in his own words on Monday night, made it plain as day that he may be considering firing the special counsel and/or the Deputy Attorney General, which would be equally egregious. The White House spokeswoman, from the podium, said President Trump believes he has the authority to fire the special counsel all by himself, and a report in the New York Times said President Trump considered firing Mueller as recently as December, in addition to a year ago in June.

Only an hour ago, the President tweeted that the “Fake & Corrupt Russia Investigation”—his words—was “headed up by all the Democrat loyalists, or people that worked for Obama.”

Mr. President, will you start telling the truth? Robert Mueller is a Republican. Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein is a Republican whom you appointed. Christopher Wray, the head of the FBI, is a Republican whom you appointed.

I don't know how long the President can believe people will swallow the bold mistruths he spews out day after day, but what he said—that the people the investigation was being headed up by are all Democratic loyalists or people who work for Obama—is patently false, and the President should retract it.

These kinds of remarks make it all too obvious that the President, who cares so little for truth, may be considering the firing of the special counsel or the Deputy Attorney General. So I would like to direct my remarks to my Republican colleagues. I say to my Republican colleagues, you can no longer rely on anonymous sources as a reason for delay or inaction on legislation to protect Mr. Mueller and avoid a constitutional crisis. The evidence is staring us all in the face. We cannot ignore the elephant in the room any longer because the consequences of the President taking action against Mueller or Rosenstein or issuing political pardons is just too dire. As Democrats have said, and as many Republicans have said, such action would precipitate a constitutional crisis in this country. The President doesn't seem to realize it, but I know my Republican colleagues do.

No person is above the law in this country—not even the President. He is not a King. He is the President. If the President were to interfere in any way with the chain of command in the Russia investigation or clean house at the Justice Department in order to install lackeys who will carry out his orders, we would be no better than a banana republic. The kinds of things we see happening in other parts of the globe would be happening here. In those

places, leaders use the levers of power to subvert or avoid accountability in all ways. President Trump seems to wish he could do just that.

I want to be crystal clear on this point. If the President were to take action against Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein, it would be every bit as grave of a mistake as removing Special Counsel Mueller. America, as we know it—as we love it—would diminish. I know Republicans and Democrats agree on that.

So why not take the bull by the horns? Why wouldn't we take immediate action to potentially prevent a constitutional crisis from coming to pass? Why don't we head it off at the pass and move bipartisan legislation that has been introduced this morning, through the Judiciary Committee—which I am told Senator GRASSLEY is seriously considering—on to the floor of the Senate, where I hope Leader MCCONNELL will place it. A bipartisan group this morning—Senators GRAHAM and TILLIS, BOOKER and COONS—have introduced legislation that would help protect the special counsel. Why not pass this legislation now and avoid a constitutional crisis? Why not avoid an injury to the body of this great country and then try to stitch it up? Why not avoid an injury instead of sustaining it and trying to stitch it up? That is what we should be doing.

Let's not wait until it is too late. Let's head the constitutional crisis off at the pass by passing the bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators GRAHAM, TILLIS, BOOKER, and COONS and take the threat of a crisis off the table right now.

So I urge Senator GRASSLEY to schedule a hearing and markup on this bill and to report it out of his committee. He must be sure not to water it down with amendments or accept changes that would render it useless. I urge Leader MCCONNELL to then take that bill and put it on the floor where we can debate and pass it. Surely, something this serious deserves the time and attention of U.S. Senators. I dare say, if bipartisan legislation like this came to the floor, it would pass by a large majority—Members of both parties—and the pressure on the House to do the same would be large.

The rule of law cannot be a partisan issue and should not be a partisan issue. We cannot let it become a partisan issue. The Congress must clearly, loudly, and with one voice pass legislation to ensure that any effort by the President to remove Special Counsel Mueller or Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein would be rendered unsuccessful.

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. COTTON. 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.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John F. Ring, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring December 16, 2022.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

#### THE OLD GUARD

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, last Friday marked the 70th anniversary of the 3rd Infantry Regiment's reactivation, and as one of its veterans, I didn't want to let the moment pass without notice.

The 3rd Infantry Regiment, more commonly known as the Old Guard, serves across the Potomac River at Arlington National Cemetery. Most here and most in the Gallery have probably visited the cemetery and seen Old Guard soldiers guarding the Tomb of the Unknowns or conducting funerals. Arkansans who visit me here in the Capitol consistently tell me that Arlington is a highlight of their trip. That is not surprising to me, because Old Guard soldiers set the standard for their dedication, their diligence, and their devotion. The 3rd Infantry is the Nation's oldest Active-Duty infantry unit, and yet the reverence we feel for them goes beyond their mere length of service and to what they represent: the dignity of freedom.

On April 6, 1948, the 3rd Infantry was reactivated on orders of the Secretary of the Army. The ceremony was held just a few steps from here, on the East Plaza of the Capitol. Then, the Old Guard immediately conducted another ceremony to present the Flag of Liberation to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. That flag had flown over this very Capitol on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941. Then, those forces raised that flag over Rome, Berlin, and Tokyo after we had defeated the Axis powers. Finally, the Old Guard led the large Army Day parade from the Capitol down Constitution Avenue, where

President Truman sat in the reviewing stand at the Ellipse.

That is not bad for their first day back with the regimental colors. It had been only 18 months since the regiment, serving with the 106th Division as an occupation force in Berlin, was caught up in the rushed demobilizations at the end of World War II. But the Army needed an official ceremonial unit in the Nation's Capital, as well as the contingency force as tension built up between the United States and the Soviet Union. So the Army called the 3rd Infantry back into service at Fort Myer, right next to Arlington, and restored "the history formerly belonging" to the legendary regiment. That was due, in no small part, to the regiment's reputation for professionalism, present from its very beginning.

The 3rd Infantry was stood up in 1784, when the Continental Congress created the "First American Regiment." The War for Independence had convinced Congress that, whatever its fear of standing armies, the country needed at least a small professional fighting force to defend it. So the 3rd Infantry started as the lone professional regiment in the early days of our Republic, when our common defense was organized mostly around State militias. To this day, its members continue to display that professionalism by holding themselves to the most exacting standards as the Army's highest profile unit and the official escort to the President.

But the 3rd Infantry's professionalism also had a serious purpose: to defend America. So faithfully has the regiment served the American people that its history and the Nation's history are thoroughly intertwined.

First, it served at posts along the frontier, where it protected American settlements against Indian attacks under the leadership of General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, and it fought the British Imperial Army to a standstill during the War of 1812. Today, members of the regiment wear a buff strap on their left shoulders to commemorate that 18th century heritage.

After the war, peacetime demobilization and reorganization gave the regiment its current name, the 3rd Infantry. Then, during the Mexican War, the 3rd Infantry distinguished itself with bravery, skill, and stamina at every major battle of the war, in places like Palo Alto, Monterrey, and Vera Cruz. Its famed bayonet charge at the Battle of Cerro Gordo is what persuaded the War Department in 1922 to authorize the 3rd Infantry to march with bayonets fixed to their rifles—a privilege still reserved solely to that regiment in the entire U.S. Army. It was because of the 3rd Infantry's valor that General Winfield Scott, the commanding general of the Vera Cruz campaign, granted it the honor of leading the victorious march into Mexico City, during which he turned to his staff as the 3rd Infantry passed in review, and said: "Gentlemen, take off your hats to the Old Guard of the Army." Ever since, the name has stuck.

After the Mexican War came the Civil War, which divided not only our Nation but also our Army. Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, who both fought alongside the Old Guard in Mexico, now faced off against each other. The 3rd Infantry fought every major battle in the war's first 2 years: First Bull Run, Second Bull Run, the Seven Days Battles, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and, finally, Gettysburg. Suffering casualties that exceeded its original strength, the Old Guard ended the war at the Union's mobile headquarters, standing alongside General Grant at the Appomattox courthouse as he accepted General Lee's surrender.

In the days that followed, the vast majority of State volunteers returned home to their families—not the Old Guard. The "regulars," as they were known back then, went straight back to the front, again protecting settlers from Indian raids across the western frontier. They defeated Spanish forces in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. They fought rebel insurgents in the Philippines and then returned to fight Muslim insurgents there, too, in some of the same places where the Islamic State is present today.

They guarded our border with Mexico during World War I. They helped to get the lend-lease program going in the early days of World War II, before deploying to Europe itself. But it was after the Old Guard's reactivation that it assumed the duties for which it is rightly famous today: performing ceremonies and military honor funerals.

For its first 162 years, the Old Guard defended America's frontiers and fought its wars, both at home and abroad. Now these new responsibilities have defined the Old Guard's mission for the last 70 years. The size and structure of the regiment has evolved, just as Arlington National Cemetery itself has grown. The Old Guard's prominence has increased, as it has participated in major internationally televised events, such as the ceremony to inter the unknown soldiers from World War II and the Korean war in 1958 and the state funeral for President Kennedy in 1963. But the essence of the mission has not changed since 1948.

It is this history, this reliability, this steady, sober leadership that the Old Guard has become known for. Their skill and proficiency, their care and attention to detail, their faithfulness and discipline—all of them—set the highest of standards of military conduct and character. Our fellow Americans see all that whenever they visit Arlington. They can imagine it on the battlefield. Then, they have little wonder why our soldiers accomplish such amazing feats of valor. That is why the Old Guard is held in such reverence, and that is why it is fitting to mark this important anniversary.

The Old Guard represents the best of our country, but also the best in ourselves. Freedom isn't free. It requires self-sacrifice and self-discipline. That

is what makes it a noble and, therefore, a fulfilling way of life. For reminding us of that dignity—the dignity that comes with being a free people—the men and women of the Old Guard deserve our deepest thanks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### VENEZUELA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, I spent 4 days in Venezuela. I had never been there before. I was given an opportunity to get a visa to go to the country, and I jumped at the opportunity. Venezuela, of course, on the north end of the South American continent, is a constant source of concern in the United States and the region, and I wanted to see for myself what was happening. No doubt, many are aware that Venezuela has been suffering devastating economic and democratic backsliding, but what I found was a country that is on the edge of collapse, facing overlapping economic, humanitarian, and political crises.

On the economic side, Venezuela has so many positive things. It is rich in natural beauty, oil, minerals, and human talent, but it has seen its economy run into the ground by mindless price controls, multiple exchange rates, and gross mismanagement. Inflation is rampant and expected to reach 13,000 percent this year, leading to what some call "a race for survival."

Imagine walking down the main street of Caracas and seeing long lines at every ATM. Why are they there? Because each day, the residents of Venezuela must go to the ATM machine with their credit card or debit card and take out the maximum withdrawal allowed. It is hundreds of thousands of Bolivars, which sound like more money than you could possibly need, but it translates into 20 cents—waiting an hour at an ATM machine for 20 cents' worth of currency so that you can ride the bus back and forth to work. That is what life is like in the capital of Venezuela.

They have universally discredited and arbitrary price controls that are eerily reminiscent of the failed policies in Cuba and the Soviet Union. They have decimated local production and left basic goods unavailable or unaffordable.

I went down the main street in Caracas and saw many shops but no customers. Basic goods were available—shampoo or diapers, for example—but they cost the equivalent of 2 or 3 months of salary. We stopped and did a translation at one store that isn't under price controls, and we found that a pound of hamburger costs \$4, which doesn't sound bad, except that that is the minimum monthly wage in Venezuela—for a pound of hamburger. People waited in long lines.