

for an answer and still wrestling with how they should vote, I commend to them the example of previous days and the example of sending a strong signal around the globe that this President is supported in his efforts in international diplomacy and that he is entitled to the team he has chosen.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes. I appreciate the distinguished minority leader for indulging me and allowing me to go forward.

I yield the floor.

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 and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Mike Pompeo, of Kansas, to be Secretary of State.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

WELCOMING THE PRESIDENT OF FRANCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I begin, I want to welcome the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, who just finished his address before a joint meeting of Congress. His words were timely, particularly his admonition to reject false idols of our time: isolationism, cynicism. He argued that if we were to advance principles upon which both our Nations were founded—as he would say, “liberte, egalite, and fraternite”—he would say it better than I, of course—and secure the prosperity and security of our peoples in the future, we must seek further cooperation with our allies and engagement with the world. I hope everyone at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue takes President Macron’s words to heart.

Madam President, the Senate is considering the nomination of Mike Pompeo to be the next Secretary of State. I must admit that even after his confirmation to the directorship of the CIA, I remained concerned about Mr. Pompeo when he was in the Congress. I talked to him directly. I told him how deeply disappointed I was in how he handled the Benghazi hearings, how partisan they were. I told him some of his comments about minority groups—Muslims in particular—were way over the top. Over the course of his tenure at Langley, I met with him several times after that first meeting where I had given him my views on some of the things I disagreed with in what he did.

I have to say, those meetings were good meetings. He was very candid

with me. He is obviously very smart. He is obviously well informed about foreign policy—far more well informed than Secretary Tillerson was when he came to visit me before his nomination hearing. In particular, what gave me some good feeling was that Mr. Pompeo was particularly strong on Russia sanctions, even showing some separation from the President as we met. I began to think Mr. Pompeo was better than my first impression, which has been guided particularly by his very poor performance in the Benghazi hearings. Then, he was nominated for Secretary of State. That is a whole different ball game. Anyone nominated for such a critical security position deserves the most careful and thoughtful scrutiny.

With that in mind, I met with Mr. Pompeo privately, where I interviewed him on foreign policy. Frankly, on many issues, our views were not the same. He was far more hawkish than I prefer our diplomat to be. Frankly, my views were probably, on this issue, a little closer to the President’s, who remembered, as I do, that in Iraq, we spent over \$1 trillion and lost close to 5,000 of our bravest young men and women, and Iraq doesn’t seem much better off today than it was then.

My view was that he was too quick to recommend strong military action when diplomacy might do. At the same time, I believe the President should get to pick his team. President Trump wanted a more hawkish Secretary of State—it would be concerning to me, but it is his decision—and Mr. Pompeo answered my questions with the same candor and forthrightness as in our previous meetings.

I thought I would wait for his hearing—because speaking in public is different than speaking privately to a Member of the Senate—before making the decision. At Mr. Pompeo’s hearing, I became very disappointed. First, the President has shown in word and deed that he often directs foreign policy by impulse—erratically, inconsistently. The fact that we are contending with several hotspots in the world—North Korea, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Venezuela, and Russia—means we need someone in the State Department who not only prizes the value of diplomacy but is willing to check the President’s worst instincts. Unfortunately, Mr. Pompeo’s testimony—and, of course, public testimony is the real test—did little to convince me that he would be a strong tempering influence on an often erratic President. He didn’t convince me that he would be the kind of Secretary who most of us believe Secretary Mattis is, who is able, successfully, to check the President when the President may go off base. Even more disappointing was Mr. Pompeo’s tepid responses to questions about his commitment to bedrock principles such as rule of law.

As important and difficult as our foreign policy decisions are, the Nation is facing a great test. The President seems to tempt rule of law in America when it comes to the investigation of

whether there was collusion between his administration, his campaign, and Russia. An investigation to look into this—to look into Russian interference in our elections and whether there was participation of the President or members of his campaign or administration—is vital to the bedrock of America. Even worse is if a President says: I can undo this investigation one way or another; I can thwart it.

He is already trying to intimidate it, but fortunately Mr. Mueller is not the type who is intimidated, and Mr. Rosenstein does not seem to be either. These questions were crucial. A key position like Secretary of State should be able to speak out on this kind of issue because America is recognized throughout the world as the country that most prizes rule of law. If our Secretary doesn’t speak out strongly against this, it is not only bad for our country but not good for his ability to do his job around the world. Unfortunately, I was deeply disappointed.

Mr. Pompeo responded, when put to this question as to whether he would stand up to the President, whether he would resign or otherwise protest the President’s actions that would undermine the rule of law—his answers were weak. He did not say he would resign if the President fired Mueller or Rosenstein. To me, a Cabinet officer should do that. He did not even unequivocally state that he would publicly urge the President not to fire Mr. Mueller. That was not good enough, but I thought I again owed Mr. Pompeo a direct discussion because he is a talented man, and the President does deserve the benefit of the doubt.

So I called him into my office for one private meeting, one final meeting. I asked him pointedly whether he would be able to simply say publicly, before we voted on him, that the President shouldn’t fire Special Counsel Mueller. I asked him what he would do if the President fired the special counsel or Mr. Rosenstein. His answers were extremely insufficient. I also asked him if he would be willing to recant or undo some of what he had said about Muslims, Indian Americans, LGBTQ Americans, and women’s rights now that he was in line to be our Secretary of State and had to deal with countries that might be affected by his remarks. Again, he demurred. When he left that meeting, I emerged with a clear conscience in that a vote against Mr. Pompeo’s nomination was the right thing to do.

I still believe a President deserves his team and that disagreements on policy alone are not sufficient reasons to reject a nomination, but I gave Mr. Pompeo the benefit of the doubt and three chances to answer the questions I thought were extremely important to assuage my broader concerns about his nomination. He did not answer those questions in any way that was satisfying. So, with a clear conscience, I will be voting against his nomination.

Let me be clear. This is not about politics. This is not about denying the

President his team just for the sake of it. It is about the role of Congress and, frankly, the Cabinet to provide a check on a President who might go off the rails and undo the respect for the rule of law, the tradition of the rule of law, that we have had in this country for so long.

It is my view that the next Secretary of State, in this unique moment of history, with a President who seems to behave erratically and with little regard, oftentimes, for our Nation's history, a President who tests our constitutional order, must be willing to put country first and stand up for our most sacred and fundamental, foundational values—for the rule of law, for the idea that no person, not even the President, is above the rule of law.

Unfortunately, Mr. Pompeo, in these very difficult and troubled times, didn't meet that test as much as I wish he had. I don't doubt that the President could nominate someone with the right experience, the right values, and the right commitment to our core, national principles to earn my vote to be Secretary of State, but I do not believe Mr. Pompeo has those qualities so I will be voting no on his nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF PASTOR ANDREW BRUNSON

Mr. TILLIS. Madam President, I have come here for the first time in what will be a weekly speech that I will give as long as we have somebody, in my opinion, who is improperly and unjustly being held in a Turkish prison.

As a matter of fact, this man, Pastor Andrew Brunson, has been in a Turkish prison for 565 days. He was arrested in October of 2016. He didn't even receive charges until about 2 months ago—so arrested, without charges—conspiracy to plot a coup attempt against President Erdogan and his regime in Turkey.

About a month ago—it was, maybe, about 2 months back, 3 months back—I heard from some people that Pastor Brunson was afraid that with his time in prison and the charges being levied against him, the American people were going to read the charges and forget about him and turn their backs. That is why I decided to travel to Turkey and meet with him in prison about a month ago. It was to let him know I had no intention of forgetting him and that I had every intention of making sure everybody understood what was going on with this case and why it should be a lesson to anybody who is thinking about traveling to Turkey today from the United States.

Before I start this, I have to talk a little bit about Turkey. It is a NATO ally. It is a country I led a delegation to when I was Speaker of the House in North Carolina. I spent almost 2 weeks there back about 6 years ago because I saw great opportunities for our State of North Carolina and the country of Turkey to build closer ties—closer eco-

nomic ties, closer cultural ties. I saw real opportunities to strengthen the relationship with a very important NATO ally. Yet now I am beginning to doubt whether what I saw in Turkey—at least the Turkey I visited 6 years ago—is the Turkey we are confronted with today.

Pastor Brunson, a gentleman from Black Mountain, NC, was part of a church up there at Montreat, which was the same church, a Presbyterian church, that Rev. Billy Graham was a part of. The injustice I see displayed to him makes me wonder if the people from the State of Iowa or from the State of North Carolina should go to that country until we understand whether American citizens can be treated justly there.

He has spent 565 days in a Turkish prison. For about 15 months, he was in a cell that was designed for eight people. It had 21 people in it. The others had been charged with terrorism and conspiracy to plot a coup. Pastor Brunson has been in Turkey for 20 years. All he is guilty of is of being a Christian and trying to bring a Christian message to those who want to hear it. He has a church in Izmir. It is a very small church. You can only seat about 120 people in it. They open it up, and they let anybody walk in off the street to hear what they are saying. They work with the police department to make sure they are secure and that they understand what they are saying. There was no nefarious purpose here except to have done his job for 20 years as a missionary in Turkey.

I am going to come back to this slide in a minute.

It is also important to understand timing. The coup occurred in 2016. Pastor Brunson and his wife Norine had actually traveled back to the United States. They were having a visit with family in North Carolina. President Erdogan and the Erdogan regime were rounding up tens of thousands of people and putting them in prison, even somebody loosely associated with the coup, and many who were not were being arrested. Pastor Brunson was in North Carolina at the time, but he and Norine went back to Turkey at a time when people were being rounded up. When he got back, they rounded him up.

Why on Earth would any reasonable person go back if he had been involved with it and had seen what had been happening in Turkey? That is just one data point. Now let's cover a few more.

First off, I have to bring this up. I have to say, after I went and visited Turkey for about 48 hours about a month ago, I went back last week. I, actually, spent 12 hours in a Turkish courthouse and listened to the charges against Pastor Brunson. It was remarkable. It was a three-judge panel. Imagine that they are sitting up at the dais, and next to them—unlike in our courts, where you have the defense and the prosecutor sitting on equal terms—their prosecutor is sitting up at the dais and is actually looking like a

fourth judge. In Turkey, you are, more or less, considered guilty until proven innocent. It truly was, in my opinion—look it up if you do not know what a kangaroo court is—a kangaroo court.

They have already decided they want to prosecute him, and they are trying to get some of the most specious, circumstantial arguments to convict him to 35 years. He is 50 years old. By the way, he has lost 50 pounds since he has been in prison. A sentence of 35 years is effectively a death sentence for the kinds of charges I will tell you a little bit about.

No. 1, it is very clear to me, after spending 12 hours in a courtroom, that the Turkish authorities believe that any religious organization is actually a part of a broader plot to undermine the Turkish Government and to promote terrorist activities. They actually view the Christian faiths, the Christian religions in the United States—the missionaries—as some sort of coordinated plot to undermine the country of Turkey. They view a missionary who risks life and limb to go into the Syrian countryside to help people who are trying to flee the carnage that is occurring in Syria—to give them food, water, and comfort—as being, in some way, someone who is perpetrating and being a coconspirator in a plot by the PKK, which is a terrorist organization that is focused on opposing Turkey. That is what missionaries are subjected to.

As a matter of fact, there was a part of the court proceedings during which they suggested the mere fact that Pastor Brunson, who is a Presbyterian, had Mormons enter his church—actually, it is just part of the services, and they are services that are wide open to anyone. Yet, because of the mere connection with the Mormons, who also do missionary work in Turkey and Syria, they were able to glue together, on a circumstantial basis, the idea that because they have actually talked to each other and the Mormons have also provided missions to the Kurdish region, they are a part of the PKK.

That is what we are talking about. That is why I am giving everyone a stern warning. If you are traveling to this country, I can't guarantee your safety based on the facts as they exist today. I am trying to get somebody out who is only guilty for actually being a Christian missionary in Turkey for 20 years.

I am not going to go into the details of this, but when you invest 12 hours in a courtroom, it is a really accelerated learning process. Let me give you an idea of some of the things they said because they observed this. We are not talking about any specific charge for something violent that occurred or something damaging that occurred. This is the level of evidence that was presented against Pastor Brunson.

There is a dish that is cooked over there. I don't know. I love Turkish food. I eat anything. Usually, when I go over there, I gain weight. It is good