

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF GINA HASPEL

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an extremely qualified person who has been nominated to be the next Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

I just left a meeting with Gina Haspel, who is a woman who has spent her entire career at the Central Intelligence Agency protecting our country. Over the decades, she has been in the field a number of times and has been in a number of dangerous situations. She has been an analyst. She has been in leadership. She is currently the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. By the way, she is the first woman who has ever been the Deputy Director of this Agency. Of course, she would be the first woman Director if she is to be confirmed.

I had an opportunity to talk to her about a lot of issues, including the morale at the CIA and how people feel about her being the Director. As you can imagine, folks over there are extremely excited about this—one of their own, someone they know and trust. They understand she has their interests at heart. I think it would be terrific for that Agency to have someone with her capability. She would be only the second Director in the history of that Agency who came up through the ranks.

I also went down to what is called the SCIF, which is a place where you can look at classified information. This week, I had the opportunity to review her background, not just what is available publicly but also what is in a classified form. Suffice it to say, I was very impressed.

I spent my time looking at her record, looking at her background, talking to her personally, talking to other people in the intelligence community to understand the impact she would have on the men and women of that Agency. I can state that I truly believe she is not only qualified, but she may be the most qualified person you could think of to run this Agency, and she will be good for the Agency.

I have the opportunity, when I go around the world to make visits on behalf of the Foreign Relations Committee—I am a member of the Foreign Relations Committee—to meet with CIA personnel. I was in Ukraine, in the Czech Republic, in Germany over the Easter break, with our troops on Easter, and had the opportunity to meet with some of the CIA employees overseas. I can just state, you would be so proud if you had the opportunity, as I have had, to meet with some of these people and talk to them about what they are doing every day to help protect us and the risks they take every day to help protect us on behalf of our national security.

Who better to provide the President of the United States with the sort of intelligence analysis needed to deal with so many challenges we face around the world than someone who has been in the trenches, who has been one of those people out in the field like the folks I met with as recently as last month? She is someone who has a deep understanding of intelligence operations.

By the way, she is not political at all—not a Republican, not a Democrat. She is a career professional. What better Agency than the Central Intelligence Agency to have someone who is a consummate professional? I believe that is one reason she has such strong support from former CIA Directors. You probably have seen this, but former Secretaries of State and former CIA Directors have come forward to support her, including Republicans and Democrats. The list includes Leon Panetta, John Brennan, and James Clapper, who were all intelligence leaders in the Obama administration. They have come out in support of Gina Haspel. It is easy to see why she is so widely supported.

Let me share one quick account I have read about. She is probably too modest to talk about it. One of her assignments was in a difficult part of the world, a dangerous part of the world. She was a station chief there. She got news that there were two senior al-Qaida associates linked to the Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. You may remember those horrible bombings. They were on their way to the country where she was stationed. With that little bit of information, she went to work. As a result of her swift actions and her dedication and intensity, she actually went full time, 24/7—they say she slept on the office floor to the extent she slept at all—and she was able to determine that these terrorists had gone to a particular hotel. Intelligence tracked them there, and after a firefight, they were apprehended. These two evil men who had killed so many people in Africa through terrorist attacks were stopped, but just as important, their computers were seized, and their computers revealed the next terror plot they were planning. Lives were saved, and Gina Haspel was awarded by George H.W. Bush the Award for Excellence in Counterterrorism.

So she has received a lot of honors like that throughout her career. I tell you that story just to give you a sense of who this woman is because I think when we hear debate in this Chamber and talking back and forth, sometimes we forget the fact that these people do work in dangerous situations to protect us.

She has been in situations where gunshots have been fired upon her vehicle, as an example. She is one of those people who all of these years has been out there serving us, and now for us not to support her, I think would be the wrong thing to do.

I look forward to the confirmation. It will be another first for her, the first

woman Deputy Director, the first woman Director, but that is not why she is doing it. She is doing it, as she told me today, because she is a patriot.

She is from Kentucky, right across the river from where I live in Cincinnati, OH. She grew up as a kid who believed in patriotism and service and protecting our country, and she has devoted her life to this.

One final point I hope some of my colleagues who might be listening or who are undecided might think about. This is an incredibly dangerous world we live in right now. Unfortunately, we face a lot of dangers. I just had the chance to talk to Gina Haspel about what is happening with regard to Iran, Syria, and the latest news with regard to the conflict between Israel and Syria. We had a chance to talk at some length about what is happening with regard to the Russian influence in Eastern Europe and particularly what is going on on the eastern border of Ukraine—the line of contact where I was a month ago, learning some of the challenges we now have with getting good intelligence with regard to what is happening in that part of the world. We talked about issues relating to North Korea and the recent return of the three hostages. I can just state, without going into detail, this woman knows the world. There would be no on-the-job training. She has been Deputy Director for 18 months, but long before that she had a grasp of what is going on around the world. She knows the people around the world, and she knows her senior leadership team as well. She is a woman who is prepared to step forward at a time when we cannot afford mistakes, when we need to have somebody who has that experience.

I would just say to the families we all represent, we are charged with voting up here, but ultimately we are charged with representing millions of Americans, each of us in our respective States. Think about their safety and think about whom you would want—whom you would want in that position. I would challenge my colleagues to think of somebody who is better qualified.

I know there are some concerns that have been raised by some of my colleagues about actions that were taken by the CIA immediately after 9/11. One, we have to put ourselves in that mindset after 9/11 and the great dangers we faced. Certain decisions were made that were considered absolutely legal. In fact, the congressional leadership, the so-called Big Eight, including the Intelligence Committee, Democrats and Republicans, were all read into it and knew what was going on and were approving of it. In fact, some would say that some Members of Congress even pushed the CIA to do even more in terms of interrogating people and getting more information to reveal thoughts that were being planned to save lives.

I understand there is new thinking about that, and Gina Haspel herself

said in her testimony yesterday that she has evolved her thinking about that, but I would ask those same Members who were talking about what happened in the early 1990s to think about what is happening today and to wonder who could be more qualified.

By the way, if she is not qualified, that means a number of other people, such as anybody in a senior leadership role at the CIA who happened to have been there at that time, would not be qualified, including John Brennan would not be qualified, who got a large bipartisan vote in this body to be the Director of the CIA, even though he was in a higher leadership role at that time at the CIA.

So, again, I hope she will be confirmed. I think she will be confirmed, but I do hope that any colleagues who are wondering which way to go will think about where we are today. It is a dangerous and volatile world. We do need somebody who has that experience, knowledge, background, and wisdom that comes with years of experience borne of actual experience in the field. And to have this smart, decent, well-qualified woman not be confirmed would be not just bad for the CIA but bad for our country and indeed bad for what all of us hope for, which is a more peaceful world and one where we do have the kind of intelligence we need to be able to keep that peace.

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

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 740, 830, and 831.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Patrick Hovakimian, of California, to be a Member of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the United States for a term expiring September 30, 2020; Gregory Allyn Forest, of North Carolina, to be United States Marshal for the Western District of North Carolina for the term of four years; and Bradley A. Maxwell, of Illinois, to be United States Marshal for the Southern District of Illinois for the term of four years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations with no inter-

vening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD, all en bloc.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hovakimian, Forest, and Maxwell nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for 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.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the votes on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 690, the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 729, and the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 777.

On vote No. 89, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 690.

On vote No. 90, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 729.

On vote No. 91, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 777. •

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, yesterday, May 9, 2018, I was in Terre Haute, IN, to attend the funeral services for police officer, Rob Pitts, a veteran of the Terre Haute Police Department and a Hoosier hero who was killed in the line of duty while serving his community. As a result, I was unable to vote.

Had I been present, I would have voted in support of the confirmation of Kurt Engelhardt to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, and I would have opposed cloture on the nomination of Michael Brennan to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

NOMINATION OBJECTION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I must regretfully object to the Senate pro-

ceeding to the nomination of Christopher C. Krebs of Virginia to be Under Secretary of the National Protection and Programs Directorate at the Department of Homeland Security, DHS.

Since November of 2017, I have urged the Department, and Mr. Krebs specifically, to be more open with the American people about the threat posed by foreign governments using cellular surveillance technology to target phones in the United States, including those used by senior government officials.

In a March 26, 2018, letter, Mr. Krebs revealed to me that DHS "has observed anomalous activity in the National Capital Region (NCR) that appears to be consistent with International Mobile Subscriber Identity (IMSI) catchers."

However, as I noted in an April 18, 2018, follow-up letter to Mr. Krebs, which was also signed by my colleagues Senator PAUL, Senator GARDNER, and Senator MARKEY, DHS has in recent months shared additional information about these and other incidents with Federal agencies. Specifically, an official from the DHS National Coordinating Center for Communications, NCC, gave a detailed presentation to an audience of Federal Government employees on February 6, 2018. That presentation included important information that I believe the American people have a right to know. My colleagues and I asked Mr. Krebs to remove the "For Official Use Only," FOUO designation from the slides used at this presentation and make them available for public release.

I remain hopeful that this is an issue we can work through and resolve soon. However, until the FOUO designation is removed from those slides and they are made available for public release, I will object to the Senate proceeding with the Krebs nomination.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION

• Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask that my remarks to the International Franchise Association be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows:

INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. What I have discovered is that those who like a center-right administration, which I do, have a hard time accepting success. I could probably do the accomplishments and achievements over the last 15 or 16 months in a 60 second version, which would be a better economy, lower taxes, fewer regulations, more conservative judges, repeal of the part of Dodd Frank that hamstrung small financial institutions in mortgage lending, Alaskan energy, a new NLRB, the local control of schools—that actually happened before President Trump came in because of a Republican majority in the Senate—and the repeal of the individual mandate. That's a pretty good list. In fact, if you only did economy, taxes, regulations and judges, at the end of four years, most administrations would be pretty happy with the