

mandate to pass an audit. The Department of Defense has a very bad record. It is impossible to know how much things cost or what is being bought when nobody is keeping good track of the money being shoveled out the door.

For nearly 30 years, we have been pushing the Pentagon to earn a clean opinion on any of their audits. Way back in 1990, Congress passed the Chief Financial Officers Act, which required all departments of the government to present a financial statement to an inspector general for audit by March 1992. All departments have complied and earned clean opinions except one and that is the Department of Defense. Instead of clean opinions, the Department of Defense has earned a long string of failing opinions called disclaimers. It boils down to the fact that the books at the Department of Defense are unauditably.

In 2010, 20 years after that 1990 congressional action, Congress finally got fed up and passed a new law requiring the Pentagon to be ready for audit by September 2017. The Department was given 7 long years to get its act together and to meet the same requirements as every other Federal agency entrusted with public money. Obviously, that deadline has come and gone like other deadlines have come and gone. According to the Comptroller and Chief Financial Officer, Mr. David Norquist, a clean audit is still at least 10 years away. That is 10 years of not being able to follow the money. If you can't follow the money, you don't know whether it is spent legally.

There is a longstanding, underlying problem preventing the Pentagon from reaching the goal of a clean audit. This is the so-called feeder system. I will not describe a feeder system, but feeder systems are supposed to capture transaction data, but those feeder systems are broken. Auditors cannot connect the dots between contracts and payments. You can't follow the money because there is no reliable transaction data and little or no supporting documentation. You tend to spend money without knowing what you even bought. The Pentagon will never earn a clean opinion until those accounting systems are able to produce reliable financial data that meet accepted standards.

Over the last 25 years, the Department of Defense has spent billions trying to fix these outdated accounting systems but with no success. How is it that the very mighty Pentagon can develop the most advanced weapons in the world but can't seem to acquire something as simple as an accounting system? We need to get to the bottom of this problem and fix it.

I am working with my colleagues on the Budget Committee to get the Government Accountability Office to conduct an independent review of the Pentagon's effort to acquire modern accounting systems. What is the problem? That is what we are trying to find out. Should the Defense Department

keep trying to fix the antiquated feeder systems or is it time to develop new, fully integrated systems that can deliver reliable financial information? We need and we want some answers.

The Department of Defense is currently attempting to conduct a full financial audit. Secretary Mattis has directed all employees to support the audit, and the results are expected in November. Although the new Chief Financial Officer appears to be making a good-faith effort to get a handle on the problem, he also happens to be spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year for audits with a zero probability of success. It could be very wasteful spending that kind of money if they don't have a feeder system in place.

The first priority of our Federal Government remains and ought to be national security. We must ensure that our military forces remain strong enough to deter any potential aggressor and, as a result, preserve the peace.

The men and women on the frontlines deserve fair compensation and the best weapons and equipment money can buy. We want to field the most capable military force in the world. Because national defense is so very important, congressional watchdogging of defense spending is very essential. We don't want one single dollar to be wasted—not even a penny.

Until the Defense Department is able to earn a clean opinion on a very regular basis, we have no assurance that Defense dollars are being spent wisely and, most importantly, according to law. Report after report shows that precious Defense dollars are being wasted, misused, and unaccounted for. Reforms have been made, but very clearly the war on waste has not been won. Much more work needs to be done.

From my oversight post in the Senate, I will continue to apply pressure on the Pentagon to step up the war on waste. I don't expect much help from the inspector general. Mr. Fine seems to be AWOL on waste. I raised the issue of the \$10,000 toilet seat cover with him over a month ago and still haven't received an answer. His office found the time to update the media about the toilet seat cover. Yet my letter has gone unanswered.

However, after revelations about the \$43 million gas station, Secretary Mattis's reaction was sweet music to my ears. He issued an all-hands memo. In that memo, he stated flatout: I will not tolerate that kind of waste. Known for being a man of your word, Secretary Mattis, I am counting on you for your help. Maybe together we can wipe out the culture of indifference toward the American people's money by the Pentagon.

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.

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

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

FAMILY SEPARATION

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I want to share with my colleagues and the American people what I witnessed on a visit to a couple of immigration detention facilities on our southern border and the stories of the people, children, and infants being held there.

On a visit to an adult detention facility, I sat down with a group of six mothers whose children had been taken from them. One of them, Anna, had a 5-year-old daughter she brought with her to the United States. After witnessing a brutal murder in her neighborhood and receiving death threats in her home country, she decided to leave that country to keep her 5-year-old daughter safe.

She traveled 3,000 miles to get to our southern border, and when she finally arrived, she thought: I am safe. I made it. I am going to tell them who I am and why I am here because I know I finally made it to safety.

She flagged down Customs and Border Patrol agents thinking that they would help her, but when she did, CBP officials arrested her. They took her into custody, and then they separated her from her daughter. Anna's daughter was put on a bus and driven hundreds of miles away.

As Anna was telling this story to me, every single one of the mothers began to cry. Anna told me this was the first time she had ever been separated from her 5-year-old daughter, and she had no idea—no idea—where her daughter was and what they were doing with her. All of the women, as Anna was telling me the story, had experienced the same thing.

Each one of the women I spoke with had children under the age of 12 who were taken away from them. Their stories were the same. They had all faced horrific gang violence and abuse in their home country and fled to protect their families. They had been raped and tortured. They saw loved ones killed before their very eyes.

Another one of the women I spoke with, Griselda, explained that in her community, the gangs expect extortion payments every week from business owners, such as herself, and if you can't pay, they come to your house and kidnap or rape or kill your children.

One day, gang members came and started threatening her son. She knew in that moment she had two options: stay and watch her son die or pack up her children and run.

I asked the group of women: Why didn't you go to the police for help? They explained to me that the police in their country are just as corrupt as the gangs. In their country, there is no rule of law. There are no protections. If you want to save your children's lives, your only option is to run, and that is what these women did.

They came to the United States expecting to find freedom and protection, but instead they were thrown in jail, and their children were loaded on buses and driven away. These parents want to now know, where are their children?

When they asked me, I told them I didn't have the information they needed, and that I, too, was asking the same questions, but I promised them I would take their stories back with me to Washington, DC, and share them with the American people.

Because of President Trump's inhumane family separation policy, we have almost 3,000 children separated from their parents. Their moms and dads just want to have their children back in their arms.

Just recently, Secretary Azar testified that there is no reason why any parent would not know where their child is located. Well, that is absolutely false. I spoke with 10 mothers and fathers who have no clue where their children are. They look at me with tears running down their faces. They pleaded with me to help them find their children.

This administration gave no thought to the damage inflicted on these families, and they clearly had no plan for how they would reunite them.

We have three different entities working to reunify these families. Two are under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and one under the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, but none of them are working together. As a result, the Trump administration has missed its court-ordered deadline to reunite young children under 5 with their parents.

There are 102 children under 5 years old waiting to be reunited with their families, but as far as we know, only 4 families have been united.

The Trump administration has been ordered to reunite up to 3,000 children with their parents by July 26, but they are on track to miss that deadline too.

In the midst of all of this, HHS officials discovered they have been holding a toddler, who may be a U.S. citizen, in detention for over a year. How could that be possible? How could the reunification process be so erratic, inefficient, and slow?

This administration has been making excuses left and right, trying to pin the blame on anyone but themselves. They have suggested that the reunification process is slow because too many Members of Congress are taking tours of these detention facilities. I couldn't help but laugh when I heard that because I can guarantee you, I was not taking a tour when I tried to enter a children's detention facility, and they locked me out. They would not let me in. I was not allowed in to check on the condition of these children or even to talk to anyone in charge about how they were taking care of children, tod-

dlers, and infants—kids under the age of 12 who have been separated from their parents, many for the first time.

I was there to find out how taxpayer money was being spent and how the kids were being treated, but the facilities manager locked the door and gave me the number for a communications director to call to seek assistance. With a handful of exceptions, most of my colleagues have also been turned away.

The Trump administration is also saying they are having trouble locating some of the parents. Part of the problem is, at least 12 of the parents with children under 5 years old have already been deported. Can you imagine that? Babies who can't even speak have no clue where their moms and dads went, and they might never know.

The Trump administration can't pin the blame for this on Congress, Democrats, or anyone else. They are missing the deadline for one reason and one reason only: because they never made a plan to reunite these families. They never intended to.

They didn't have a plan 2 weeks ago, when I went down to the border, and they don't have one now. They created this chaos with no plan to put the broken pieces back together.

They had to start from scratch trying to locate parents and children detained across the country, and now we are hearing heartbreaking stories of reunification—toddlers who do not recognize their mothers anymore. The physiological trauma this administration has inflicted on these children will last a lifetime.

So, today, I am calling on President Trump to finally do his job and provide us with a concrete plan. I want to see results, and I will not stop fighting until every child has been reunited with their parents. Stop making excuses. Stop blaming Democrats for the crisis you created, President Trump.

The other thing I keep hearing from this administration and from President Trump's allies is, the Democrats want open borders. This is not about open borders. I support strong, secure borders. I have spent my career fighting to uphold the law as the attorney general of the State of Nevada for 8 years, fighting to secure our borders. It is not about secure borders. We need a plan to reunite these families because this is about our values. This is about human rights. This is about who we are as a country, and separating families is not who we are. We do not tear babies out of their mothers' arms.

We have always—always—had a guiding principle when it comes to children: We do no harm. Whether they are Honduran children, Guatemalan children, Salvadoran children, or American children, we do no harm.

I call on President Trump, abandon your inhumane, zero tolerance immigration policy; abandon the heartless decision to separate families.

We should be looking for humane, cost-effective alternatives to detention

for families fleeing violence. We don't need the Department of Defense to build internment camps for babies, toddlers, and kids.

Locking up families who are seeking asylum under the laws we have put in place to protect them will be a moral stain on our country for generations to come.

President Trump, the American people demand that you explain how you plan to reunite these families you have scarred forever and whom you ripped apart. Work with Democrats to solve the refugee crisis in Central America. Don't treat innocent parents and children as political pawns. Don't turn your back on everything this country stands for.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. 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.

REMEMBERING ROGER L. SHERMAN

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I wish to acknowledge the loss of one of West Virginia's brightest and recognize the life of a dedicated advocate, educator, veteran, and good man: Roger L. Sherman.

Throughout his life, Roger was known for his dedication to responsible forestry and the people of rural West Virginia. From championing economic development to advancing graduate-level education, Roger made significant contributions in the areas of public advocacy, education, and community service that benefit West Virginians to this day. Above all, Roger was highly regarded as a man of conscience, whose integrity pervaded every aspect of his life and work.

A veteran, Roger served in the U.S. Army for 3 years until 1969. He graduated from North Carolina State University with a bachelor's of science in forestry and went on to obtain a master's degree in forestry from Yale University. He joined Westvaco as public affairs forester in 1977, and from there, embarked on a more than 40-year career advancing the interests of private landowners in West Virginia. During this time, he served as volunteer chair of the legislative committee of the West Virginia Forestry Association, WVFA, a position he held for 38 years. He also received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Outstanding Service to Forestry Award