

the obvious to Vladimir Putin. The President should say: Don't ever interfere in U.S. elections again. I don't want your help, and I don't believe your absurd denials. He refused to say that.

Compare his bizarre and dangerous comments in Helsinki with what President Ronald Reagan said before the 1988 NATO summit. Instead of bullying our closest allies, Ronald Reagan said:

Our first priority is to maintain a strong and healthy partnership between North America and Europe, for this is the foundation on which the cause of freedom so crucially depends.

Again, Ronald Reagan said:

Our first priority is to maintain a strong and healthy partnership between North America and Europe, for this is the foundation on which the cause of freedom so crucially depends.

There is at least one Republican Senator who is not silent. My friend and a great American patriot, JOHN MCCAIN, said this yesterday about the Helsinki press conference:

Today's press conference in Helsinki was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American President in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naivete, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate. . . . President Trump proved not only unable, but unwilling to stand up to Putin. He and Putin seemed to be speaking from the same script as the President made a conscious choice to defend a tyrant against the fair questions of a free press, and to grant Putin an uncontested platform to spew propaganda and lies to the world.

I could not agree more. It is obvious. We, all of us, Democrats and Republicans, should agree with what JOHN MCCAIN said.

Despite President Trump's shameful denials of Russian interference at yesterday's farce of a press conference, the evidence is clear: Russia did interfere in the 2016 election. Our intelligence agencies and the bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee have concluded that not only did Russia interfere in our elections through cyber attacks, but they did so to harm Hillary Clinton, help elect Donald Trump, and undermine our democratic process.

When Donald Trump hears those words, it sends him into a rage. He denies any Russian interference for fear that it might reflect on his victory in the election. There is no evidence that has been produced to date that shows that Russian interference changed the outcome of that election. I am not questioning whether Donald Trump won the Electoral College and became President, but I don't think he should question whether the Russians were trying to undermine that process.

During his ongoing investigation into Russian meddling, Special Counsel Mueller has so far indicted 32 individuals and 3 companies on a total of 191 criminal charges. This includes the February indictment of 13 Russian trolls who engaged in a multiyear effort to influence our election, to support the election of Donald Trump by

sowing discord and inflaming social tensions online.

The Mueller investigation includes 12 members of the Russian military intelligence, specifically named, who were indicted last Friday for engaging in a sustained operation to hack into the emails, accounts, and computer networks of the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaign.

These Russians also created online personas and worked with WikiLeaks to publish the stolen documents. To cover their tracks, they committed identity theft, engaged in money laundering, and at one point leased a computer in my home State of Illinois to store and move the stolen documents through encrypted channels.

Additionally, the Russians hacked into the computer networks of election officials and vendors in order to steal voter data and other information. The indictment, produced by Special Counsel Mueller, mentions that the Russians "hacked the website of a state board of elections . . . and stole information related to approximately 500,000 voters, including names, addresses, partial social security numbers, dates of birth, and driver's license numbers." This was, presumably, in reference to the Illinois State Board of Elections, which we already knew was one of the first victims of a successful Russian cyber attack—a Russian cyber attack that President Donald Trump refuses to believe ever happened.

We know that Russia meddled in the 2016 election, and we know that we should be gearing up for Russia to interfere with the 2018 midterm election as well. Just this past weekend, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, my former Republican Senate colleague from the State of Indiana and a man for whom I voted for this position and whom I respect very much, reiterated the ongoing threat that Russia presents, saying: "In regard to state actions, Russia has been the most aggressive foreign actor—no question—and they continue their efforts to undermine our democracy."

What a departure from what President Trump said in Helsinki yesterday. His own Director of National Intelligence has refuted the statement he made to the world yesterday, agreeing with the "powerful statement" of Vladimir Putin's that he had nothing to do with an attack on our election. Our President is cozying up to Vladimir Putin at the expense of the credibility of his own Director of National Intelligence. Why is this happening?

Instead of condemning President Trump and supporting the Special Counsel's efforts of getting to the bottom of this, sadly, the vast majority of congressional Republicans are actively working to undermine the investigation.

Just last week, Senate Republicans confirmed the nomination of Brian Benczkowski to serve as Assistant At-

torney General in charge of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice. They voted for Mr. Benczkowski to be in charge of 600 Federal prosecutors despite the fact that Mr. Benczkowski, as a lawyer, has never been in a trial—never. He has never been in a courtroom and has never been in a trial. He was named by President Trump to head up the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice. That may not be the worst part.

Mr. Benczkowski, in his private law practice in Washington, also chose to represent a Russian bank, the Alfa-Bank, which has deep ties to Vladimir Putin. This is despite the fact that when he was called on it, he said he would not commit to recusing himself from this Russia investigation.

Furthermore, this vote occurred as President Trump and House Republicans had been looking for an excuse to fire Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein, who is overseeing the Mueller investigation. Should Rosenstein be fired, Mr. Benczkowski could be easily tasked by the President to oversee the Russia investigation. That would be an unmitigated legal disaster.

Enough is enough. Today is the day that, I hope, my colleagues—Democrat and Republican alike—will step forward and speak up.

The world is still reeling from the comments that were made yesterday in Helsinki by the President of the United States of America. There are serious questions from our longtime NATO allies—those who count on the United States for the safety and security of their republics. There are serious questions in their minds about who we are, what we stand for, the relationship between this President and Vladimir Putin—a relationship which is absolutely inexplicable in that President Trump would refuse to concede the obvious—that Vladimir Putin is setting out to undermine our values in the world.

President Trump should stand with the brave men and women of law enforcement, intelligence, and the Department of Defense who have warned him about Vladimir Putin, and he should not be so easily swept away with these meetings he has.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President:

[Yesterday's summit] was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American President in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naivety, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate. . . . President Trump proved not only unable but unwilling to stand up to Putin. He and Putin seemed to be speaking from the same script as the president made a conscious choice to defend a tyrant against the fair questions of a free press, and to grant Putin an uncontested platform to spew propaganda and lies to the world.

Coming close on the heels of President Trump's bombastic and erratic conduct towards our closest friends and allies in Brussels and Britain, today's press conference—

Yesterday's press conference, actually—

marks a recent low point in the history of the American Presidency.

No prior president has ever abased himself more abjectly before a tyrant. Not only did President Trump fail to speak the truth about an adversary; but speaking for America to the world, our president failed to defend all that makes us who we are—a republic of free people dedicated to the cause of liberty at home and abroad. American presidents must be champions of that cause if it is to succeed. Americans are waiting and hoping for President Trump to embrace that sacred responsibility. One can only hope they are not waiting . . . in vain.

Those are very strong words. People would say: Well, CHUCK SCHUMER is the Democratic leader. Of course, he is going to criticize President Trump. But those strong, biting, and effective words are not mine. Those three paragraphs I quoted come from JOHN MCCAIN, who is probably the leading Republican expert on military security, national security, and foreign policy.

When Senator MCCAIN said that, it should be a clarion call to every Republican to not just speak up but to take action because the national security of America is in danger.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator MCCAIN's statement, in its entirety, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN STATEMENT ON PRESIDENT TRUMP'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PUTIN

"Today's press conference in Helsinki was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naiveté, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate. But it is clear that the summit in Helsinki was a tragic mistake.

"President Trump proved not only unable, but unwilling to stand up to Putin. He and Putin seemed to be speaking from the same script as the president made a conscious choice to defend a tyrant against the fair questions of a free press, and to grant Putin an uncontested platform to spew propaganda and lies to the world.

"It is tempting to describe the press conference as a pathetic rout—as an illustration of the perils of under-preparation and inexperience. But these were not the errant tweets of a novice politician. These were the deliberate choices of a president who seems determined to realize his delusions of a warm re-

lationship with Putin's regime without any regard for the true nature of his rule, his violent disregard for the sovereignty of his neighbors, his complicity in the slaughter of the Syrian people, his violation of international treaties, and his assault on democratic institutions throughout the world.

"Coming close on the heels of President Trump's bombastic and erratic conduct towards our closest friends and allies in Brussels and Britain, today's press conference marks a recent low point in the history of the American Presidency. That the president was attended in Helsinki by a team of competent and patriotic advisors makes his blunders and capitulations all the more painful and inexplicable. "No prior president has ever abased himself more abjectly before a tyrant. Not only did President Trump fail to speak the truth about an adversary; but speaking for America to the world, our president failed to defend all that makes us who we are—a republic of free people dedicated to the cause of liberty at home and abroad. American presidents must be the champions of that cause if it is to succeed. Americans are waiting and hoping for President Trump to embrace that sacred responsibility. One can only hope they are not waiting totally in vain."

Mr. SCHUMER. It is still difficult to comprehend what transpired yesterday in Helsinki. Because of his actions, it was one of the worst days for any President of the United States in recent memory. On foreign soil, President Trump said the United States was to blame for the state of the relationship between Russia and America.

He trashed American intelligence and took the word of the KGB over the word of the men and women of the CIA. Can you believe it? Can you believe it? He said Russia's intelligence agency, which murders, steals, lies, and cheats, is better than ours. There is no rational explanation for an American President to do such a thing. It was the act of a man who seems incapable of distinguishing between his own narrow personal interests and the interests of America's national security.

Can you imagine if President Kennedy believed Khrushchev when he said there were no missiles in Cuba? Can you imagine if President Reagan believed Gorbachev without verifying that the Soviet Union would reduce its missile stockpile? We would be living in a much different world than we are today. Thank God President Kennedy and President Reagan showed strength in the face of tyrants—but President Trump shows abject weakness and sycophancy.

Let me explain to the President why he is being so strongly criticized when he embraced Putin's strong and powerful denial. The reason, President Trump, that you are being so criticized when you accept Putin's word is, Putin is a trained liar. He lies brazenly, shamelessly, and repeatedly about big things and small.

Putin lied about the presence of Russian troops in Crimea. He lied about the Malaysian airplane being shot down by a Russian rocket. He lied about Russian athletes doping at the Olympics. He lied about Russian behavior in eastern Ukraine. He lied about

Assad's use of chemical weapons. He lied about interference in the Brexit vote. Just last week, he lied about the Kremlin's involvement in a recent nerve agent attack in the United Kingdom.

Yet when President Putin gives President Trump a "strong and powerful denial" that he didn't meddle in our elections, President Trump immediately accepts Putin's word over the considered judgment of America's dedicated intelligence professionals. It is almost as if Donald Trump is embracing Putin's needs. I am ashamed of it, and every American should be. No previous President would be that naive or that weak. No serious leader would allow themselves to be taken in so easily.

The only person with cause to celebrate is Vladimir Putin. Putin got to stand on the stage with an American President who refused to hold him accountable for anything. He watched President Trump career through Europe, carrying out Putin's dream agenda—torching old alliances, interfering in the domestic affairs of the United Kingdom, weakening NATO and American power in the region. Putin skated through a bilateral summit and press conference without facing any consequences for deliberately meddling in our elections. Putin could not have scripted a better result.

I am from Brooklyn. If we learned anything, we learned one thing there: When there is a bully around, as Putin is, you show strength. President Trump showed abject weakness. Do you know what that means? The bully will continue to take advantage of it. If Donald Trump was such an easy mark in Helsinki, President Putin will realize he is an easy mark elsewhere.

The behavior of the President is just inexplicable. Everyone in the United States is scratching their heads. There seems to be no rational explanation for President Trump's behavior, and so millions of Americans are left wondering if Putin indeed has something over the President. That is the most logical explanation of the President's bizarre and weak behavior so deleterious to American interests.

If there is another credible explanation for why President Trump behaved the way he did, it would behoove the President to let the American people in on it; otherwise, so many Americans are going to continue to wonder, does President Putin have something over President Trump that makes the President behave in such a way that hurts our country so?

We know the President doesn't like to prepare much, but even the most basic preparation would lead a President away from the erratic behavior we saw yesterday. The truth is, the summit yesterday was like an x-ray machine, revealing that "America First" is really just "Trump First," no matter what it means for the country he is sworn to defend from enemies foreign and domestic.

So the question looms: What will the Senate do in response? What will my Republican colleagues do in response? A few of them have echoed Senator MCCAIN's sentiments, and they deserve recognition for that, but those Senators who are not JOHN MCCAIN, who are here in the Senate wielding an immense power to shape events, I say to them, words are not enough. Our response to the debasement of American interests before a foreign adversary demands a response, not just in word but in deed. Our Republican colleagues cannot just talk the talk—some of them have done that, most haven't—but, as a body, they need to walk the walk. The American people are demanding it.

Our country needs to see Republicans in the Senate and the Republican Party stand up and show through action that unlike our President, they will not tolerate Russian aggression or accept Putin's lies. They need to act in the spirit of Ronald Reagan, not in the spirit of Donald Trump. Too often, when the President goes off the reservation, the Republican Party has lightly rebuked his behavior and waited for everyone to move on. Given the crisis, given Trump's horrible actions, that is not good enough. Our Republican colleagues cannot just go tsk-tsk. They must act if they want to help America.

Yesterday, I outlined four things we could do immediately in response to the President's disastrous summit. Let me repeat them and add a fifth.

First, ratchet up sanctions on Russia, not water them down. The sanctions we passed 98 to 2 have not even been fully implemented. Some in the House now want to reduce those sanctions. We need to strengthen them.

Second, and very importantly—probably most importantly—our Republican colleagues need to join us in demanding testimony from the President's national security team that was in Helsinki, and we need to do that immediately. We need hearings as soon as possible to assess what President Trump might have committed to President Putin in secret. President Trump's public statements were alarming enough. The Senate needs to know what happened behind closed doors. Does anyone believe he was tougher on Putin in secret? You can't assume anything but that as weak as he was in public before President Putin, he was even worse in private. Why else did he not want anyone in the room?

President Trump and President Putin met one-on-one behind closed doors for nearly 2 hours. Where are the notes from the meeting? What did the President agree to? Was Secretary Pompeo briefed afterward on what happened? Were any other members of the President's team briefed? The American people need to know what is happening. The American people deserve to know what is happening. It is our security at risk.

I am calling on Leader MCCONNELL and his leadership team to imme-

diately request a hearing with Secretary of State Pompeo and the rest of the President's national security team from Helsinki so we can find out what the heck happened there—the explanation for what happened openly, and even more importantly, what happened in that meeting behind closed doors.

Third, our Republican friends must end the attacks on the Department of Justice, the FBI, and the special counsel. Those have mainly emanated from a small group in the House.

Given the indictments, given the indictment yesterday, not from Mueller but from mainline Justice, we have to let this investigation go forward. President Trump's actions yesterday lead many more Americans to suspect that something was amiss; that there may have been collusion. What else would explain President Trump's actions and protestations in a foreign country?

We need to end these attacks and let the investigation proceed unimpeded and encourage the President to sit down for an interview with Mueller.

Fourth, the President must insist on the extradition of the 12 Russians recently indicted for election interference. In one of the more bizarre of many bizarre incidents yesterday, Putin suggested that Americans come and interview the Russians in Russia or actually watch as Russian agents interview the Russians in Russia. Is Russia known for a free and open judicial system? Is Russia known for the rule of law? Of course not. It was an absurd suggestion. Any other President would have rejected it out of hand.

We need to bring them here, and the President, to represent the honor and the strength of the United States—something he has failed to do thus far—needs to demand it.

Finally, election security. Our elections are at risk. We have now had indictments of Russians interfering in the 2016 elections. Everyone in America, except Donald Trump, admits that happened—Democrats and Republicans, Speaker RYAN, Leader MCCONNELL—that Russia tried to interfere and interfere, most everyone believes, on President Trump's behalf. Why? Well, we heard Putin's explanation.

We can't have that happen again. We must move election security legislation immediately.

To its credit, in a bipartisan way, this Chamber and the other put \$380 million in the last omnibus for election security, but there is very fine legislation. One is sponsored by Senator KLOBUCHAR, and she has worked with some of the Republicans on that. Another is sponsored by Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN. I believe Senator RUBIO is a co-sponsor of that. We need to move that legislation—hopefully, with bipartisan support—quickly.

These are five simple things we can do together, Democrats and Republicans.

Now, yesterday, I saw my good friend—I see him sitting here—Senator CORNYN say that we have done most of

these things already. I wish it were so. It isn't. We haven't done any of it. Leader MCCONNELL has not called for hearings to bring Secretary Pompeo and others here. We have not increased sanctions, which we should do. In fact, there is a move in the House to decrease them. We have not asked the President to demand extradition of the Russians. We have not urged some Republicans, particularly in the House, to stop interfering with the Mueller investigation. We haven't done any of the four items I mentioned yesterday or the fifth I mentioned today. I hope Senator CORNYN and others will lead the charge and help us get those done, in a bipartisan way, for the sake of this wonderful and great country.

The bottom line is that we need to act. A few statements will not change President Trump's behavior and will not stop President Putin from continuing to make a mess of our alliances around the world and our elections here in America. Action is required. The eyes of America are on the Republicans in the Senate to join us in the actions I have outlined or other actions they might feel appropriate.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, turning to SCOTUS, I will conclude this morning by adding that at this very delicate time, Senators from both parties should carefully scrutinize President Trump's Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh. Not only has President Trump promised to select judges who would overturn *Roe v. Wade* and undo the healthcare law, Judge Kavanaugh has some troubling views on Executive power and accountability.

We have all just witnessed the behavior of a reckless President who has shown he is willing to test the bounds of Executive authority at home, just as he is willing to depart from all wisdom and sense on foreign soil.

Judge Kavanaugh has demonstrated in several writings that he believes the President should be above civil and criminal indictment while in office and that the President should be granted broad deference to enforce or not enforce laws he "deems" unconstitutional.

Consider for a moment what it would mean for the Supreme Court to rule that this President is immune from indictment or that he should be allowed to exercise his authority so wantonly as to decide which laws to enforce or not. That is all the more reason, given what Judge Kavanaugh has written, that he get careful and rigorous scrutiny before we move on any vote.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). Morning business is closed.