

that matters of justice and human rights are of enough importance to be of legitimate interest to other member states. Respect for these principles inside a country is often a predictor of the country's external behavior. So countries such as ours have a reason to be involved.

At the recent meeting of the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly, we began a formal inquiry into Mr. Nemtsov's unsolved murder and have appointed a rapporteur to review and report on the circumstances of the Nemtsov assassination as well as on the progress of the Russian investigation. As the chair of the U.S. delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I supported this process from its conception at an event I cohosted last July in Berlin.

Yet, as the United States of America, there is more we can do. To that end, I am glad to cosponsor a resolution with my Senate colleagues that calls on our own government to report back to Congress on what we know of the circumstances around Boris Nemtsov's murder. This resolution also calls on the Treasury Department to use tools like the Magnitsky Act to sanction individuals who have been linked to this brutal murder, such as Ruslan Geremeyev.

We hear constantly from Russian opposition figures and civic activists that personal sanctions, such as those imposed by the Magnitsky Act, have a deterrent effect. Vladimir Putin has made it abundantly clear that these sanctions, based on personal accountability, are more of a threat to his regime than blunter tools, such as sectoral sanctions, that often feed his propaganda and end up harming the same people we are trying to help in Russia—innocent citizens. To its credit, the Trump administration has done a better job than had the previous administration in its implementing of the new mandates and powers Congress authorized in both the Russia and Global Magnitsky Acts. We are in a much different place than we were when these tools were originally envisaged nearly 10 years ago.

The administration is mandated to update the Magnitsky Act's list annually, with there being a deadline in December that sometimes slips into January. Now it is already March, and we have yet to see any new designations under the law that the late Mr. Nemtsov himself called the most pro-Russian law ever adopted in a foreign legislature. While the law has been lauded by Russian democrats, it is rightly despised by those like Vladimir Putin who abuse and steal from the American people.

Recall that it was at the Helsinki summit late last summer between the leaders of Russia and the United States of America—perhaps the grandest stage in U.S.-Russian relations in a decade—where Mr. Putin himself requested that his investigators be able to depose U.S. officials most closely associated with passing and implementing the

Magnitsky law, as if they were criminals.

We need to show the Russian dictator that this sort of bullying will not stand and that we will continue to implement the Magnitsky Act thoroughly and fairly.

A year ago, I participated—along with many of my colleagues in the House and Senate—in the unveiling of Boris Nemtsov Plaza in front of the Russian Embassy here in Washington, DC—the first official memorial to Boris Nemtsov anywhere in the world.

One day, I hope there will be memorials to Boris Nemtsov all across Russia, but the best tribute to his memory will be a Russia he wanted to see, a just and prosperous Russia, at peace with its neighbors and a partner with the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The Senator from Iowa.

UKRAINE

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise to speak on Russia's ongoing and illegal occupation of Ukraine.

Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to travel to Ukraine where I saw firsthand the effects of nearly 5 years of Russian occupation, aggression, and hostilities suffered by the Ukrainian people.

Since Russia's illegal seizure of Crimea in March of 2014 and their subsequent invasion of eastern Ukraine's Donbas region the following month, over 10,000—10,000—people have been killed and many more have been wounded or displaced in the fighting. Hiding behind so-called pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, the regime of Vladimir Putin has indiscriminately targeted both civilian and military targets, across the line of contact, in flagrant violation of the Minsk ceasefire and the law of war. In fact, shelling was occurring just 1 day prior to my visit to the Eastern Front.

The Eastern Front, even saying it now, before my colleagues in the Senate, the phrase seems almost surreal and harkens back to a bygone era in which the Cold War dominated our political landscape.

The first time I visited Ukraine was in 1989—1989—as part of an agricultural exchange program. The Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse, and the spirit of independence, freedom, and self-determination was gaining steam. My gracious Ukrainian hosts didn't want to discuss farming. It was an agricultural exchange, but they didn't want to discuss farming. They wanted to know what it was like to be an American. They wanted to know what it was like to have freedom and be independent.

Just like the oppressive yoke of authoritarianism dominated Ukraine in 1989, it once again threatens a people who have fought hard to create a nation of laws accountable to its people and as champions of human dignity, free markets, and democratic values. With our help, Ukraine has managed to

hold the line against the Russian aggressors. Our security assistance, in the form of intelligence-sharing, special operations capacity-building, and, most recently, the delivery of Javelin anti-tank weapons, has enabled the Ukrainian Armed Forces to deter further Russian advances into free Ukraine and has caused the Russian military forces in occupied Donbas to pull their tanks farther away from the frontline.

Unfortunately, Russia has found other ways to attack Ukrainian interests. In November of 2018, just a few months ago, Russian naval vessels opened fire and captured three Ukrainian ships along with 24 sailors in international waters just south of the Kerch Strait. Demonstrating his contempt for the international rules-based order, Vladimir Putin is using his naval supremacy in the region to slowly strangle the Ukrainian economy, which relies, in part, on steel and grain shipping from ports in the Sea of Azov. While our military aid has been successful in assisting Ukrainian efforts along the line of contact in Donbas, future military aid must take into account Ukraine's need for defensive weapons and asymmetric capabilities to counter Russian aggression both on land and at sea. Only then can Ukraine adequately defend its people and sovereignty.

In addition to hostile military action, Russian intelligence has been working to undermine the upcoming Ukrainian Presidential and parliamentary elections. Much like the interference in our own elections in 2016, Putin is seeking to sow discord, spread confusion, and undermine the democratic system that has taken root in Ukraine. This is indicative of Russia's global strategy, which seeks to drive a wedge between the United States and our allies, undermine democratic governments, and return to an era of power politics in which brute strength rather than the rule of law governs global interactions.

China has adopted a similar, albeit more subtle and increasingly aggressive, strategy in Asia, with an overarching goal of displacing American global leadership. Thus, it is more important than ever for the United States to work by, with, and through our allies around the world to ensure a future in which our values of freedom, the rule of law, human rights, and free markets prevail for generations to come.

Today freedom's frontier runs through the line of contact in eastern Ukraine. We must never turn our backs on a people yearning for the same freedoms we enjoy in the United States. Doing so not only legitimizes the actions of thugs—yes, thugs—around the world but will inevitably threaten our own rights and freedoms tomorrow, which many of us take for granted today.

We are Americans, and we will always answer the call to preserve freedom while reaching out a hand to those who are fighting to achieve it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

TORNADOES IN ALABAMA

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, people across the country and around the world today have seen the images of the terrible devastation left by tornadoes that touched down in Lee County, AL.

Lee County is home to Auburn University, and so many of the wonderful constituents there have suffered mightily over the last 24 hours. As of right now, we know 23 people have lost their lives—23—and as we speak, rescue teams and first responders are still out searching for others who may have been hurt. We pray that we have seen the last of the loss of life, but that is to be determined.

Already, this is one of the deadliest storms in our State's history, and Louise and I want to offer our most sincere condolences to all of those who have been affected by this horrible event. The youngest victim we know of was only 6 years old. My heart goes out to all the folks who have lost loved ones, who suffered damage to their homes and their businesses, and I ask that everyone pray for their comfort and healing.

I also thank the courageous first responders who put their lives on the line time and again to help folks in need. Our rescue crews are working around the clock, and we are so grateful to them for the work they do every day but especially on days like today and yesterday after tragedies like these strike. These are our friends and neighbors who step up in the wake of disaster to help their community, sometimes—sometimes—while struggling with the tragedy on a very personal level themselves.

Unfortunately, this is an all-too-familiar sight in Alabama. We have seen our fair share of natural disasters. On a single day in 2011, an estimated 60 tornadoes devastated so many towns and cities, including Cullman, Hackleburg, Pratt City, and Tuscaloosa, killing over 200 people. All of these have a way of being personal.

That day was especially personal for my wife, Louise, who is from Cullman. I was out of town that day attending a judicial conference and called her as she was watching on television how her town was being destroyed, debris flying everywhere, and she could barely speak. She can still barely speak about it today. As U.S. attorney, in April of 1998, I saw firsthand the devastating damage to the Oak Grove and Edgewater communities, where 32 people lost their lives. That destruction in Edgewater was especially personal to me because that is where my grandparents lived for so many years and where my parents lived when I was first born. I can remember walking

that day across the slab that was left of the little church my parents attended when I was born, walking across with President Clinton. It is unbelievable to witness that kind of damage.

Jacksonville, AL, is still rebuilding after a tornado severely damaged their city last year, including the campus of Jacksonville State University. Last fall, Hurricane Michael ravaged our farmlands in the Wiregrass in South Alabama, destroying cotton crops that were ready for harvest and 30-year-old timber. Yesterday's tornadoes touched down at a time when North Alabama is already dealing with historic flooding in Cherokee County.

I mentioned, it just seems all too often these have a personal note. As I checked in with my staff last night, I realized that two of my staffers who are with me on the floor today, Garrett and Michael, also are from that area. They also are concerned. It is a horrible situation to be this far away, knowing what is going on in your hometown and not knowing whether your loved ones are in the path of that destruction.

Alabama, however, is a resilient place, and we have an incredibly capable disaster preparedness and response agency, one that works around the clock when needed, but given all we have faced over the past year, we will still need help. While there is much yet to be done in the immediate aftermath of this storm, we know a full recovery will take a great deal of time and resources.

So I am here tonight to ask my colleagues in the Senate to stand ready to help Lee County rebuild and heal. Disasters will strike all of our communities at some point or another, and that makes it all the more important that we work together when they do.

To the folks in Lee County, AL, who have lost everything and who have lost loved ones in this disaster, I am in this with you for the long haul. I promise you that. I know things will never be the same for many folks, but I do promise that I will do everything I can to help.

I have already been working with Senators PERDUE, ISAKSON, and others to secure disaster funding for the 2018 storms that hit the Southeast last year. We are hoping that we can get an agreement on that bill very soon and get it onto the President's desk so those farmers can be ready for the next planting season that they are about to go into.

In the days ahead, I am going to be working closely with colleagues here in the Senate to secure Federal disaster funding that includes Lee County, AL, because, despite the fact that we are in the early stages, it is easy to see from the photographs and the videos of the devastation that they will need it.

We have been in touch with Governor Ivey and other local officials about how we in the Senate can best help. As the dust settles, we will be down there to try to make sure that our offices do

what is necessary to help those fine people.

In the face of all of these terrible tragedies, the thing that gives me hope is the strength of my fellow Alabamians. They are an amazing—amazing—citizenry. From one end of the State to the other, they are amazing people who see tragedy, but they build on that tragedy. Yet they never lose hope. Even though an event like this can be incredibly difficult, I have seen the resolve of the people of Alabama, and I know that we will be able to rise and rebuild.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO RICHARD C. SHELBY

Mr. President, I will conclude my remarks on that, but I would like to take one other moment.

At this point, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate my friend and my Senate colleague RICHARD SHELBY.

Yesterday, Sunday, March 2, he became the longest serving Alabama Senator in history, beating the record of the late-Senator John Sparkman, who was a Vice Presidential nominee.

Senator SHELBY's legacy in Alabama is unparalleled, beginning over in the House of Representatives, when he was first elected to this body in the election of 1986, taking office in January of 1986. He is leaving a remarkable mark on Alabama every day that he is in the U.S. Senate.

There are so many things that the people of Alabama are thankful for. I can assure you, I am both thankful and honored to be in the Senate with him and to serve alongside him.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 2 minutes.

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

TORNADOES IN ALABAMA AND GEORGIA

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I am from Georgia. Last night in Georgia, Alabama, and throughout the Southeast, one of the worst tornadoes went through that has ever gone through in history.

Twenty-three Alabamians were killed last night; a number of homes in Georgia were wiped out and ruined. I don't think we had a death, but they had 23 in Alabama. The tragedies we are having in the Southeast continue to rise.

In a few weeks, we are going to ask the Senate to pass a disaster bill to reinstate some of the agricultural money for the last 2 years for our pecan crop, our blueberry crop, and others.

On behalf of the people of Georgia, I just want to say that we are having a tough time. Our agricultural community is in the most difficult time it could possibly be. We are going to ask the Senate to work with us to find appropriations that would make sense to bring back those pecan and blueberry farmers in Georgia, Alabama, and