



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 25, 2019

No. 107

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, You have given us eyes to see, ears to hear, and minds to understand. Reveal Yourself to our law-makers so that what they see, hear, and think will glorify You. Today, may they desire and do that which is most acceptable to You. Lord, use them so that Your will may be done in our Nation and world as they trust the unfolding of Your powerful providence. As they wait for You, O God, renew their strength, enabling them to mount up with wings as eagles, running without weariness and walking without fainting.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 1 minute.

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

TAX TREATIES AND PROTOCOLS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, later today, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to consider four protocols to the United States' tax treaties with Spain, Switzerland, Japan, and Luxembourg. I support swift action on these protocols

both in committee and in the Senate, and I urge my colleagues to vote yes on them.

I encourage the committee to also take up the new tax treaties with Chile, Hungary, and Poland as soon as possible. These new treaties will provide important benefits to U.S. taxpayers and the U.S. Government.

After years of discussion and debate, the time has come to move forward on all of these bilateral agreements.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

TAX TREATIES AND PROTOCOLS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, let me first associate myself with the remarks of the chairman of the Finance Committee. These tax treaties are extremely important to a number of American businesses, and I thank him for his advocacy.

IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the Senate and the Nation are closely watching the situation in the Gulf. Last week, the recent recklessness from Tehran reached a new level. Iran fired on an unmanned U.S. intelligence aircraft that was flying over international waters. This is as violent and dangerous an overt provocation as any nation has aimed at the United States in, literally, years.

This is not a time for partisanship, but, unfortunately, we are already seeing extreme voices on the far left that are so afflicted by the "Trump derangement syndrome" that they repeat Iranian talking points and advertise the absurd notion that our country, our administration, our President are somehow to blame for Tehran's violent ag-

gression. Blame America first. By 2019, nobody should need a history lesson on Iran, but, apparently, some need a refresher, because there should be no question about who is at fault.

Iran has disregarded international law and violated the laws of armed conflict since the first days of the Islamic Republic. Its malign activities as the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism include its crusade to destroy Israel, including its sponsorship of countless terrorist attacks; the malevolence throughout the Persian Gulf, including proxies in Yemen who have recently attacked civilian targets; perennial threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, a key international waterway that is essential to global commerce; and, of course, the longstanding asymmetrical war it has waged against us that began with the infamous takeover of the U.S. Embassy in 1979 and the 50-plus hostages who were held captive for 444 days; the provision of weapons, training, funding, and direction to terrorist groups, including Hamas, Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Taliban, and Shiite militias in Iraq, which are responsible for the murders of hundreds of U.S. servicemembers from Lebanon to Iraq to Afghanistan, and more attacks plotted on U.S. targets worldwide, including in our own homeland.

The record is blindingly obvious. It is why so many of us opposed the Obama administration's deal with Iran. Many of us understood that the agreement not only failed to properly address the nuclear threat but that it also completely ignored the other threats that Iran posed to international peace and stability. In fact, some prescient Members of this body warned that the deal would amplify Iran's dangerous behavior.

I remember back in 2015 when the current ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee insisted the Obama administration's policy would invite the kind of mess we see today.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S4475

Here is what he said:

If there is a fear of war in the region, it will be one fueled by Iran and its proxies and exacerbated by an agreement that allows Iran to possess an industrial-sized nuclear program and enough money in sanctions relief to significantly continue to fund its hegemonic intentions.

This was said by our colleague from New Jersey, who was the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee back in 2015.

Here is my colleague from New York, the current Democratic leader, and what he said: “Under this agreement, Iran would receive at least \$50 billion in the near future and would undoubtedly use some of that money to redouble its efforts to create even more trouble in the Middle East and, perhaps, beyond.” That was from the Democratic leader in that same year.

He acknowledged that the hard-liners’ “No. 1 goal [is] strengthening Iran’s armed forces and pursuing even more harmful military and terrorist actions.”

This is exactly the situation President Trump inherited in 2017, as emboldened Tehran was committed to spending its new resources on military capabilities, exporting terrorism, and pursuing regional hegemony. So President Trump was right to seek a better deal and apply maximum pressure on Tehran until it changed its destabilizing behavior. Tough sanctions are compounding the economic pain the mullahs have brought on their own people through corrupt mismanagement.

Iran is responding to this legitimate and judicious application of diplomatic and economic pressure the way it has effectively operated for years—what do they always do?—through violence, attacks against commercial vessels in international waters, sponsored attacks against civilian targets in the Gulf, and then last week’s unprovoked attack on our unarmed aircraft.

We face a choice here. Will we legitimize and incentivize Iran’s use of terror and aggression or will we stay resolute and apply appropriate and proportionate pressure until Tehran respects the fundamental norms of international behavior?

Last Thursday, President Trump consulted with a bipartisan group of congressional leaders and national security chairmen and ranking members. The President weighed advice from a number of sources. It is clear he was listening to congressional leaders. Clearly, the President wants to avoid war—hence the deliberate and judicious approach he has taken since the shoot-down; hence his repeated efforts to give Iran’s leaders an off-ramp toward negotiations.

Nevertheless, there is a general consensus that this act of aggression cannot stand. Tehran must understand it may not respond to legitimate diplomatic pressure with illegitimate violence. It is in our national security interest for the United States to deter

attacks against American forces that are operating legally in international waters and to honor our long history of defending the freedom of the seas and the freedom of international commerce.

Since Iran’s aggression and threats to global commerce threaten everyone, I hope all nations will join the United States and its allies in condemning Tehran and imposing significant consequences for its hostile acts.

Look, I understand the significant appetite in Congress for the President to consult with us as he continues to deliberate. Obviously, that is appropriate. My colleagues should share their views with the administration. I understand that the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees will be holding hearings with senior administration officials after July 4. What is not productive is an effort being promoted by the Democratic leader that would preemptively tie the hands of our military commanders, weaken our diplomatic leverage, embolden our adversaries, and create a dangerous precedent.

Therefore, I will strongly oppose the Udall amendment, which would gratuitously take crucial options off the table. It would hamstring both our commanders and our diplomats, all of whose leverage depends on the knowledge that the United States reserves the right to act forcefully if and when necessary.

Ten years ago, my friend the Democratic leader said verbatim: “When it comes to Iran, we should never take the military option off the table.” That is exactly what the amendment he supports would do.

Nearly every President has utilized a limited use of force against adversaries without pre-authorization from Congress. Nearly every President has done that. Of course, major hostilities require congressional concurrence and the support of the American people. So the Democrats should stop their fear mongering because no one is calling for major military operations—not the President, not his military commanders, not the Republicans in Congress.

This amendment would impose unprecedented limitations that would go far beyond the War Powers Resolution. As drafted, it could prevent U.S. military forces from defending themselves against an attack or conducting a timely counterattack. If we had actionable intelligence that an attack were imminent, it would prevent U.S. forces from doing anything about it. If Israel were attacked, it would prevent U.S. forces from providing immediate assistance to our closest ally in the region.

This amendment flies in the face of many Democrats’ past clarity about Iran, and it casts doubt on our seriousness in defending our own military personnel, much less the freedom of the seas.

The Democrats must set aside the habit of unthinking, reflexive opposi-

tion to every single thing this President does. That is why I call it the Trump derangement syndrome. Perhaps it would help if they were reminded of what the Democratic candidate for President in 2016 had to say about what her policy would have been toward Iran and the Gulf had she been elected.

Here is what Hillary Clinton had to say:

I will reaffirm that the Persian Gulf is a region of vital interest to the United States. . . . We’ll keep the Strait of Hormuz open. We’ll increase security cooperation with our Gulf allies, including intelligence sharing, military support, and missile defense to ensure they can defend against Iranian aggression, even if that takes the form of cyberattacks or other nontraditional threats.

She went on:

Iran should understand that the United States, and I as President, will not stand by as our Gulf allies and partners are threatened.

She concluded by saying:

We will act.

That was from Hillary Clinton.

So nearly every word of that statement accurately describes the policy the Trump administration has pursued for the last 2 years.

Our Gulf allies and partners are threatened by Iran. Israel is threatened by Iran. The Strait of Hormuz is threatened by Iran. And America has been attacked by Iran. The threat is not in doubt. The question is whether Democrats still mean what they said or whether they completely changed their minds about how the U.S. must respond simply because—simply because—the White House has changed parties.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on a related matter, this week the Senate is considering the National Defense Authorization Act. The current situation with Iran is a stark reminder of our urgent responsibility to ensure our military remains equipped and ready to deter threats and defeat potential challenges to our security.

When we pass the NDAA this week, the Senate will extend a 58-year tradition of authorizing the resources U.S. forces need to stay on the cutting edge. And I hope we will do so with wide, bipartisan support.

This year’s NDAA directs \$750 billion to fund the priorities of the Department of Defense, from the Navy’s fleet strength to missile defense capabilities. It increases procurement for critical weapons systems, doubles down on research and development of next-generation technologies, and makes new investments in training and support services for servicemembers and their families.

In short, this is legislation that sends a clear signal to our men and women in uniform and to the rest of the world. Here is what it says: The United States