

Mattis said. He may be the most respected military leader we have, even though he is in retirement. He said: This makes it much more likely that ISIS gains strength and can hurt us.

What the heck is going on here? This transcends any ideological differences we may have—whether we agree with President Trump or disagree and whether we think he is a good President or think he is an awful President. This goes beyond that. What is going on?

After Republicans spent years criticizing our former President, President Obama, for simply failing to recite the phrase “radical Islamic terror,” then our Republican friends should be apologetic at what the President has done. It is not simply reciting this phrase. The President, through his actions, whether it is inadvertent or not, has made radical Islamic terror more real and more dangerous.

In one fell swoop, President Trump has deserted our partners, emboldened three of our chief adversaries, provided a lifeline to ISIS fighters who have been taken off the battlefield, and put American troops and America in harm’s way. Truly, this is one of the most thoughtless and dangerous policy changes that President Trump could have made. That it was made seemingly on a whim—without consulting our military commanders, without notifying Congress, and, most egregiously, without thinking its consequences through—makes it even more alarming.

We have entered a dangerous moment, my friends. It is increasingly clear to everyone that the President’s erratic decision making has endangered our national security and the security of our partners and allies around the world. Strong sanctions, while good and justified, will not be sufficient in undoing that damage, nor will they stop the consequences stemming from the ISIS jailbreak.

So the first step, as Congress returns, is for Democrats and Republicans to join us in passing a resolution making clear that both parties demand that the President’s decision be reversed.

This is bipartisan, but our Republican colleagues have a special place here because they will have far more success in getting the President to reverse course and change his views. There is a solemn obligation on every one of the 53 Republican Members here.

They know it is dangerous. Are they going to still be afraid to criticize President Trump? They have not, so far, but this resolution is the strongest action we can take.

Ultimately, of course, the only person able to immediately stop this tragedy from unfolding is the President himself. The President made the decision alone. He alone is responsible for its consequences. President Trump, hopefully, importuned by Congress, Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate, will use this moment—must use this moment—to step

up, admit his grave mistake, and correct course.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Barbara McConnell Barrett, of Arizona, to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

#### WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, we have heard a lot about whistleblowers in the past several weeks. There has been an outpouring of concern for whistleblowers ever since word came out that there was a whistleblower complaint that implicates the current administration.

A lot of those on the other side of the aisle, expressing support for whistleblowers, to the best of my recollection, haven’t expressed the same level of concern for whistleblowers in the last administration.

Well, welcome to the table. I hope you stay at the table quite a while.

I have said for years that it is critical that we protect the whistleblower process to incentivize the disclosure of true waste, fraud, and abuse of the taxpayer’s money. Those processes must be carefully followed by all whistleblowers, and that process must be respected by our government’s institutions. Those legal processes are especially important for government employees who work in the intelligence field. Whistleblowers who act in good faith, who comply with the disclosure process set out by law, and who report their concerns through proper channels deserve to be heard and deserve to be protected.

I have also said that first-, second-, and third-hand information doesn’t make or break a whistleblower. If they follow the procedure, that is really most important. However, hearsay is a factor to take into account when analyzing the strength of underlying alle-

gations. Clearly, first-hand knowledge is much more powerful than second- and third-hand knowledge. That is just common sense.

It is common sense no matter what the allegations are or who the subject is, and there needs to be a consistent approach in the way that Congress conducts oversight. On April 8 of this year, I spoke on this Senate floor about the need for consistent oversight. I pointed out clear double standards between what the Democrats are doing to the Trump administration and the blind eye that they have used on any fact pattern that might damage their political narrative.

Let me remind the Democrats that I threatened to subpoena the President’s son and that my staff later deposed that son. In fact, I investigated alleged Russian collusion with the Trump campaign and interviewed more than 10 people connected to the June 2016 famous Trump Tower meeting, many of them Trump campaign officials. By the way, I also welcomed Democrats’ participation in those interviews. The Democrats did participate. But, unfortunately, the same equal access and transparency doesn’t exist in the House of Representatives these days as they do oversight of what has gone on with the famous telephone call to the Ukrainian President.

I have routinely challenged the administration’s policies and engaged in robust oversight to hold this administration accountable. My oversight and investigation units have sent out almost 300 letters to the executive branch since President Trump took his oath of office. So I think I can declare myself an equal-opportunity overseer because I seek facts, irrespective of party and no matter where they lead.

I don’t think many of the Democrats today can say the same thing. These folks today, who are suddenly so concerned about congressional oversight, are the same ones who had no interest whatsoever in defending the institutions of the legislative branch when the Obama administration was in office.

Quite frankly, I find it all too convenient that the Democrats today have used allegations of wrongdoing against the President that actually apply much more clearly to their own political leaders. Let us begin down this road with the now-debunked Russia collusion investigation.

First, the Clinton campaign hired Fusion GPS to do opposition research against candidate Trump. Second, the Democratic National Committee did the very same thing. Third, Fusion GPS hired Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer, to compile the famous Steele dossier.

Even James Comey, a former FBI Director, a man who leaked sensitive government records to spark a special counsel investigation, called that Steele dossier “salacious and unverified.” That same Steele dossier factored heavily in the FBI’s investigation against Trump.

Fourth, Fusion GPS then—would you believe it—used Russian Government sources for information for that Steele dossier.

Now, it is a fact, not merely an allegation, that the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party used a foreign intel officer and information from the Russian Government to undermine the Trump campaign and later the Trump administration. And that is not Trump. No, Trump didn't do any of that. It was the Democrats. The Democrats' action literally fit their own definition of collusion. Maybe that is why the Democrats have failed to seek documents and information relating to how and why the now-debunked FBI investigation into Russian collusion started, because the Democrats would be front and center in that investigation.

Special Counsel Mueller's investigation didn't look at the Democrats' role in collusion, either. After 2 years, more than 2,800 subpoenas, approximately 500 search warrants and witness interviews, and \$30 million in taxpayers' money, that report ignored what the Clinton campaign and Democrats did. I can see why President Trump would be so frustrated at being incorrectly painted as a Russian agent.

So what is next? Now that the collusion narrative has been destroyed, the Democrats have turned to Ukraine. First, the news reports said Trump offered a quid pro quo, and then Trump released not only the call transcript with the Ukrainian President but the intelligence community complaint. Those were extraordinary acts of transparency, and with transparency comes accountability. The call and complaint showed no quid pro quo. The call showed that Trump was concerned about whether Ukraine had a role in the debunked Russia collusion narrative.

This is a reasonable concern, and it is a concern that I share. Accordingly, since I share that concern, on July 20, 2017, I wrote to the Justice Department about reports of brazen efforts by the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign to use the Government of Ukraine for the express purpose of finding negative information on then-Candidate Trump in order to undermine the Trump campaign.

Ukrainian officials reportedly "helped Clinton's allies research damaging information on Trump and his advisers." Moreover, Nellie Ohr, the wife of Justice Department official Bruce Ohr, stated during a congressional interview that Fusion GPS used a Ukrainian politician as a source for derogatory material against then-Candidate Trump. It is no wonder, then, that President Trump is concerned about Ukraine's involvement in the debunked Russian collusion narrative.

The phone call also showed that he was concerned about then-Vice President Biden firing a prosecutor who was investigating one of the largest natural gas firms in the world. That firm happened to employ Biden's son. Years

later, Biden bragged about getting the prosecutor fired. This has been seen on television a lot:

We're not going to give you the billion dollars. They said, you have no authority. You're not the president. The president said—I said, call him. I said, I'm telling you, you're not getting the billion dollars. I said, you're not getting the billion. I'm going to be leaving here in, I think it was about six hours. I looked at them and said: I'm leaving in six hours. If the prosecutor is not fired, you're not getting the money. Well—

Then he used a cuss word.

He got fired. And they put in place someone who was solid at the time.

The Democrats have argued that Trump has tried to get the Government of Ukraine to look into this matter to benefit his political campaign. Yet it doesn't sound like there is much concern from many on the other side of the aisle about what Biden claimed to have done.

There is also another call transcript I would like to share. This one says the following:

We put some more ideas down to resolve the airport dispute we have with British Airways, USAir, and American Airlines. Would you take another look at that and see if we can get it done?

Further quoting:

It's sort of a big deal here. . . . In a political season, it would be big over here to get this open sore resolved. If you could have somebody take a look at it.

Well, that was President Bill Clinton asking for a political favor during the 2000 Presidential election between Al Gore and George Bush. I don't hear any objection whatsoever from the Democrats about the substance of that call.

Now the Democrats have also accused the President of obstructing Congress. Here, too, I think they have selective memory.

The Democrats in the Obama Justice Department didn't bat an eye when Clinton's associates deleted records subject to congressional subpoena and preservation orders. In March of 2015, Secretary Clinton's attorneys had a conference call with Paul Combetta, the man who helped manage Clinton's nongovernment server. After that call, he deleted Clinton's emails with BleachBit, a software program designed to prevent forensic recovery. Combetta admitted he lied to the FBI in his initial interviews and got immunity from the FBI in exchange for agreeing to tell the truth.

So the Obama administration gave immunity to the person who deleted Clinton's emails after a call with her attorneys. To this very day, the FBI has yet to explain why they took that course of action. During the course of the FBI's investigation, it recovered thousands of work-related emails that were not turned over to the State Department by Secretary Clinton. The FBI also recovered work-related emails that Secretary Clinton and her associates apparently deleted. All of this is very clear evidence of alienation of Federal records, which happens to be a Federal crime.

What also troubles me about one aspect of the Clinton investigation is that the FBI agreed to limit the scope of their review to her time as Secretary of State. That eliminated potentially highly relevant emails before and after her tenure that could have shed light on why she operated a nongovernment server. It also eliminated emails around the time of that conference call that could have shown what exactly was intended in deleting those emails. That limitation of scope defies reason.

Lastly, the FBI agreed to destroy records and laptops of Clinton's associates after reviewing them. That is an astonishing agreement in light of the fact that these records could have been relevant to an ongoing congressional inquiry that the FBI knew about.

So where were the Democrats when all of that happened? Where was their outrage at the potential obstruction of justice and obstruction of congressional oversight? Seems to me that if the Democrats want to be consistent, they will have to address what was done and what was totally ignored in the Clinton investigation. Russia. Clinton. Ukraine. The Democrats have ignored facts relating to these investigations that would destroy their political narrative, but facts matter, and the facts are not going to go away.

It is a shame that they have gone down this road in such a blatant attempt to remove a duly-elected President from power simply because they can't get over the 2016 election. Instead of coming together to work for the American people and to pass trade deals and legislation that would lower drug costs for seniors, the Democrats choose to gin up false political controversies while ignoring the involvement of their own political leaders.

Get over yourselves. All of us will be footnotes to footnotes in history. It is the policies that we leave behind that will matter for future generations, not smear campaigns.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

#### PENSIONS

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I thank Senators MANCHIN and STABENOW for joining us today. Senators BALDWIN and CASEY will come later to shine a light on the more than 1 million workers and retirees across this country who are on the verge of facing massive cuts to the pensions they have earned.

I want to thank the workers and retirees who are in Washington this week. You will see teamsters, sheet metal workers, mine workers, carpenters, ironworkers, bakers and confectioners—retirees, mostly—who have earned this retirement but because of an action in this body, simply haven't had that retirement promise fulfilled. They are demanding that Congress honor the dignity of their work and honor the promise of those pensions.

The crisis affects thousands in my State of Ohio and affects the massive