

briefings. He makes it up day by day, with his personal political priorities, his jealousies, and his headline addiction guiding his decisions rather than anything connected to our actual national security interests. Our foreign policy is in complete, utter, total meltdown, and it is time for all of us to face facts.

You can't impeach a President because you disagree with their policies, but this is beyond a policy disagreement. This is a President who has compromised our Nation's integrity and our credibility, who has put in jeopardy the safety of our citizens, especially as ISIS breaks out of detainment and looks to regroup to threaten America again in Syria.

These kinds of things—the perversion of the powers of the Presidency—are not allowed in a democracy. Our refusal to accept this kind of behavior is what separates us from all the tin-pot dictatorships around the world.

I hope, eventually, my Republican colleagues see this, but I also want my Republican colleagues who spend their time thinking of themselves as bulwarks of national security to see the damage, much of it irreparable, that Trump is doing to our position in the world. Why continue to offer him this unconditional protection from an impeachment inquiry if the cost of his staying in office is the shattering of our reputation around the world?

Why continue to defend him if his actions everywhere are causing the world to fall apart—and it is falling apart in every part of the globe. Everything this administration has touched has gotten worse. The scariest part is that this President and this administration still have 14 more months to do even more damage.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Oklahoma.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, let me take you back to December 2016. We are all getting ready for Christmas. It is a month after President Trump is elected. He will not take his office for another month after that, but in Turkey they are reeling from a coup attempt that happened in October. Hundreds of people were killed—chaos. Turkish President Erdogan overreacted, locking up hundreds of thousands of people, including one of our pastors, Pastor Andrew Brunson, and implementing martial law, which was kept in place for years after that. Rapidly changing the Constitution, he has transitioned himself from a President duly elected and operating a free democracy that has been Turkey to radically changing the direction of the country in the future. A long-term NATO ally is going through real turmoil.

In October that coup happened, and all the transition was occurring, but by December, as I mentioned before, they were rocked again. On December 17, 2016, a bus was stopped at a red light

near a campus in Turkey when a car bomb exploded, killing members of the Turkish military. Thirteen people were killed and 55 were wounded in that blast. Forty-eight of those killed and wounded were off-duty military personnel, most of them privates and corporals.

The same day, at another location in a different part of that community, still in Turkey, there was a soccer stadium attack that happened. In that attack, 44 people died and more than 150 people were wounded. Three days later—actually two days after that, December 19, 2016, the Russian Ambassador to Turkey was assassinated in Ankara while he was giving a public speech.

Most Americans don't know this because we were getting ready for Christmas, and we were watching the transition of President Obama to President Trump. There was a lot of chaos that was happening in that region at that time. I happened to be in Turkey when all of that was going on, meeting with Turkish officials, trying to negotiate for the release of Andrew Brunson, working toward our ongoing relationship and trying to figure out what direction Turkey was going to go because they have been a longstanding ally to the United States and a NATO partner, but they certainly were not acting like it in 2016, and now, in 2019, they are certainly not acting like it.

The car bombs I mentioned and the terrorist actions that happened might surprise some Americans to know weren't led by ISIS fighters fighting in Turkey. The innocents who were killed that day were killed by Kurdish terrorists—Kurdish folks who had been listed in the U.S. listing of official terrorist organizations, a group called the Kurdistan Workers Party, or the PKK—the abbreviation in that language. The PKK has been listed as a terror organization by the United States for decades.

Let me give some context. In the course of the dialogue I have heard in the last couple of weeks about the Kurds and about the Turks, everyone wants to seem to oversimplify this issue. Everyone wants to say who are the good guys and the bad guys, and they are missing the point in the history of what is happening in this region.

The Kurds have 25 million people. It is the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East. They live mostly in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Armenia. They have all different political parties, and they have all different backgrounds. For over a century, they have worked to have their own nation.

Interestingly enough, after World War I and all of the changes on the map after World War I, the Kurds were promised their own country, the country of Kurdistan, because they were a minority population for a long time in that region. So they worked for and pressed for their own country during that time period. Yet, when the bound-

aries were drawn at the end of World War I, after they had been promised that they would have their homeland, instead, a larger Turkey was drawn, and the Kurds were just listed as a minority group inside of Turkey.

They face incredible persecution within Turkey. They are not allowed to call themselves Kurds. Instead, they are called mountain Turks in that area. They are not allowed to wear certain garb, and they are not allowed to practice their customs. They are oppressed in every area. They have worked for a long time and have asked: How can we have a free people's area?

For the Kurds who live in northern Iraq, it is one of the freest areas in all of the Middle East. They have the freedom of religion and a free capitalist economy. It is a thriving economy in northern Iraq. They have democratically led elections, and they worked with us to overthrow Saddam Hussein after Saddam Hussein gassed thousands of Kurds to death in that Kurdish region of Iraq. They were gassed by Saddam Hussein. They have been forced out of their homes and have been isolated, and for decades, they have worked to have a free country.

In 2017, the Kurds who were in northern Iraq had their own referendum to be able to establish their own place. They made a bold move and said: The world will not acknowledge us; so we will acknowledge ourselves. So, in a bold referendum in September of 2017, 90 percent of the Kurds voted to form their own country out of northern Iraq. Quickly, the Iraqi Government moved into that zone and squashed them.

In the middle of the conflict that we have talked about before with ISIS, ISIS moved into areas in Syria and in Iraq and pressed in against the Kurds in order to attack them. When the Kurds were not able to establish their homeland, ISIS was determined to establish its own caliphate and its own land by beheading people and by murdering thousands of people. As they moved into the Kurdish area, the Turks on the other side of the border simply watched the refugees flee across the border, for ISIS was not killing Turks. It was killing Kurds, and they didn't care. The Turks would handle the refugees as long as ISIS was doing their bidding in Syria.

You see, this is a complicated issue for us because there are sections of the Kurds that have fought for democracy for decades. Many of them have been doing it in exactly the right way—in having referendums, in organizing and working with U.N. officials, and in working with the countries around them to demographically establish an area in which they would be free to live and to worship and to function in a capitalist economy. That has been the Kurds' desire. There has also been an offshoot of the Kurds, called the PKK, that has for decades carried out car bombs and attacks, many of them in Turkey, where hundreds of civilians have been killed.

President Erdogan, of Turkey, has determined that all Kurds are the same and has ruthlessly lashed out at them. Now, I think about how we operated in Afghanistan and how differently the United States really thought about military warfare. As the Taliban and al-Qaida rose up in Afghanistan, we engaged in the most Surgical way we possibly could with violent Taliban members and with members of al-Qaida and took the battle specifically to them while we established a friendship and a longstanding partnership with the Afghan people.

We don't look at all Afghans in the same way, in some blanket declaration. We understand that there is a violent faction that has to be addressed for world peace and that there are others who just want their children to grow up and go to school.

We have engaged them in a way that is very different than how Turkey is currently engaging them in the Turkish population. As the battle raged in Syria and finished out with the civil war in Syria and the fight with ISIS off the Kurdish areas, everyone knew, when this calmed down, that at some future date, the Turks would start going after the Kurds. It has been known for years. In fact, in 2016, when I was in Ankara, Turkey, at that point in December, and watched all of this chaos occur, that was the ongoing dialogue among Turkish leaders at that time—that they were going to go after the Kurds. Over and over, this has been the repetitive statement to the administration and, quite frankly, to the previous administration.

In a series of phone calls in which President Erdogan talked to President Trump and said, “We are crossing the border and going in,” it left President Trump in a very difficult situation. Does he leave our American men and women—a very small number—in a forward operating base to sit there while tanks roll by and the battle rages between the Kurds and the Turks? Do we use them as some kind of tool to try to stop this? Do we get out of harm's way?

Secretary Esper just made a statement last weekend that was very clear: The Turks didn't ask permission to cross the border. They said, “We are coming,” and notified us in advance so that if we wanted to move out of the way, we could, but either way, they were coming.

We have moved our forces into other areas and combined them into bases. Just recently, within the last couple of days, when the Turks started getting closer to our combined forces in northern Syria, we responded by putting up Apache helicopters and F-16s in order to fly by the Turks and say: Don't you dare come near American forces. At the same time, we are trying to do everything that we can and should in order to stop the bloodshed between two allies.

I have been amazed at the number of people who have stepped up and said that President Trump is to blame for

all that is happening with the Kurdish people and the Turks. They have ignored the basic history of what has happened in that region for a very long time—for over a century—with regard to the ongoing battle between the Kurds and the Turks. We should do everything we can to push back on this, because, for a large group of the Kurdish population, especially those in northern Iraq, they have been very close allies and friends and tenacious fighters against Saddam Hussein. They left their own place of safety in northern Iraq to help us fight the fight in Syria—to protect other Kurdish people, yes, but also to help protect the entire world from the ruthless nature of ISIS.

We should engage and do what we can to help stop the bloodshed. As I mentioned before, when we moved into Afghanistan, we did it as surgically as we could. When Turkey moved into the Kurdish regions, it unleashed artillery fire against civilians and pummeled homes and businesses in the Kurdish towns of people who meant them no harm as they crossed the border into Syria.

So what do we do? How do we respond in the days ahead? There are a few things I would bring up. One is the “what I wish.”

I wish the administration had been more clear with Turkey and her leaders and would have said: If you do this, it is not that we will impose sanctions, but here is exactly what the sanctions will be. We need you to know it, and it is going to happen as rapidly as possible.

I wish that we would have moved all of the ISIS fighters out of the region. There are ISIS fighters who are currently imprisoned in northern Syria who are waiting to return back to their home countries, for many of them are foreign fighters from other places. Yet their home countries are not willing to take them back. So they are currently imprisoned in Syria. I wish, before the Turks crossed the border, that we would have done more to help to protect those prisoners and make sure they didn't get freed. Many of them did get freed, and the entire region will suffer the consequences of some very bad actors who will get back to the battlefield again because of that.

I wish there had actually been coordination. Clearly, the administration did not coordinate with the State Department, the Department of Defense, and with other Kurdish leaders with regard to what was happening in the region and did not make sure we were securing those fighters and preparing for that moment. Instead, it was a rapid transition and a hurried process to move Americans out of harm's way in between two allies who were fighting each other and to try to shift them to other places and be able to stabilize them in those locations. There have been a lot of hurried responses that could have been done differently but were not.

The “now whats” are pretty clear, though.

President Trump has launched out and stated very clearly that there will be strong sanctions against military leaders within the Turkish Army and the key leaders in the government. He will try to put sanctions down as rapidly as possible on those individuals.

He has also announced a 50-percent steel tariff on Turkey. You may say that it is no big deal, except for the fact that steel is a major export for Turkey, and it is a punishing tariff on it as a country.

He has also started laying down additional sanctions on Turkey and has said all of the trade agreements and conversations are currently at a standstill. Turkey's economy is on the razor's edge because Erdogan has so mismanaged its economy for so many years.

We have no beef with the Turkish people, but, currently, Turkey is being led by a leader who is leading their country into economic ruin and leading their military across foreign borders to haphazardly kill civilians. We should not tolerate that, and we should engage. We should make it very clear that there will be consequences.

We should work with the U.N., as we already have started, and be more aggressive, by which, if there is someone to stand between two warring parties, it will be the U.N. peacekeepers who will do that, not American men and women who are sitting out there in a forward operating base.

We should continue to sanction Turkish banks—those banks that did business with Iran. When Iran was sanctioned, Turkey continued to do business with some of those banks. We should increase our sanctions there.

We should be extremely clear that Turkey will not get access to the F-35s. I cannot imagine how much stronger the response of the American people would be right now if it were American F-35s that were flying across the Syria-Turkey border to bomb our own allies the Kurds. We should make it very clear that there is no foreign military sales to Turkey, and we should continue to cut them off.

We have to be clear in the consequences. We have to be rapid in the response because, right now, people are dying in northern Syria. Those same families and those same individuals put their own lives on the line to stand up against ISIS, and they stood with us in multiple areas. They have a great propensity toward freedom and toward democracy, which desperately need to grow in the Middle East.

The chaos that is ensuing is the chaos of war. It is the pain of over a century of the mismanagement of this entire region. We need to stop the bloodshed first and continue to negotiate with every possible lever that we can to make sure we can bring a sense of calm to the chaos that is starting and do so with the greatest pressure on the Turks and on President Erdogan, who clearly hasn't gotten the message yet as to what the will of the American

people and this Congress really involves.

This is a changing situation. It is not simple, but it is one about which I will come back and try to inform in every way that I can. In order to bring justice to the process, I will encourage this body to smartly and quickly engage, to help impress upon the Turks to back off the bloodshed, and to bring war crimes against any Turk or any individual we can identify who is killing prisoners and attacking civilians.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from the Nebraska.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise to voice my strong support for the passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or the USMCA.

When I travel the State of Nebraska, I always hear directly from our farmers and our ag producers. Nebraska's farmers have endured some of the most challenging setbacks in recent memory. The severe flooding from last spring devastated thousands of acres of our farm and our ranch land, brought hundreds of livestock deaths, and destroyed barns, countless grain bins, hay, and critical farm equipment. This list of daunting obstacles continues to grow.

Last July, the Gering-Fort Laramie-Goshen irrigation tunnel collapsed and cut off a crucial source of surface irrigation water to the western region of our State for several weeks.

Only a few days earlier, a devastating fire broke out in a Tyson beef processing plant in Holcomb, KS. The plant processed about 6,000 head of cattle every single day. That is roughly 6 percent of the total fed cattle processing capacity in the United States.

The effects of the plant's closure rippled throughout the entire cattle industry and the beef processing chain. This is all in addition to 5 years of low commodity prices, the unfair small refinery exemptions for oil refiners, and the cloud of uncertainty over trade.

While all of these factors have caused anxiety and unpredictability, there is one solution that Nebraska's farmers, ranchers, ag producers, manufacturers, and hard-working men and women have made clear, and that is the passage of the USMCA.

Nebraska's farmers and ranchers have a different lifestyle than most people. Their patience is steadfast. They plan for the long term. They can envision how they want their land to look, not only next year but 100 years into the future. It is in their DNA, and families are fed around the world because of it.

They are optimists, but they are realists. As Secretary Perdue recently said, "they know you can't plant in August and harvest in September."

That is exactly right. Our producers have remained patient during these tough and turbulent times because they know that there is an opportunity for a better, long-term trade solution on the horizon.

The USMCA would replace the 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, and bring the deal into the 21st century, while fortifying our strong trading relationships with Canada and Mexico and growing critical market access for Nebraska.

The heart of Nebraska beats in the same rhythm as agriculture. It is who we are, and as the world knows that it is what we do better than anyone. So it is not hard to understand why our State needs this deal.

America's neighbors to the north and south are the destination of 44 percent of Nebraska's total exports. In 2017, Nebraska shipped \$447 million of agricultural products to Canada and a staggering \$898 million to Mexico. These exports include hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Nebraska's high-quality corn, soybeans, ethanol, and beef.

Specifically, the USMCA maintains and strengthens those markets for corn and soybeans. It also allows U.S. beef producers to continue to grow their exports to Mexico, which have risen 800 percent since NAFTA was first ratified.

In 2018 alone, Nebraska exported over \$250 million dollars of beef to both countries.

It is important to note that the benefits of the USMCA extend far beyond our farmland. Agricultural trade between Canada and Mexico supports nearly 54,000 jobs in the State of Nebraska. According to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska's \$6.4 billion in agricultural exports in 2017 translated into \$8.19 billion in additional economic activity. For the good of our State and our Nation, these markets need to be protected.

The USMCA goes even further than NAFTA. It adopts labor and environmental standards that Democrats have long advocated for. It requires that 40 to 45 percent of auto content be made by workers who earn at least \$16 an hour by 2023. This will undoubtedly help close the gap in labor standards between our Nation and Mexico.

According to the U.S. Trade Representative, the deal includes new provisions to prohibit the importation of goods produced by forced labor.

The USMCA addresses violence against workers exercising their labor rights, and it ensures that migrant workers are protected under labor laws.

The deal brings labor obligations into the core of the agreement, and most importantly, it makes them fully enforceable.

On top of that, the USMCA deploys the most advanced, comprehensive set of environmental protections of any trade agreement in our Nation's history. The list of environmental protections includes first-ever articles to improve air quality, support forest management, and ensure procedures for studies on its environmental impact.

New provisions protect a variety of marine species, such as whales and sea turtles, and there are prohibitions on shark finning.

Unlike NAFTA, the USMCA provides enforcement mechanisms that will ensure that all countries not only meet but strengthen their environmental responsibilities.

Lastly, I want to point out to my Democrat colleagues the support the USMCA is receiving on both sides of the aisle.

I recently heard Tom Vilsack say this:

I think under any evaluation, from the U.S. agriculture perspective it clearly is a better deal. So, with that our hope is that it gets done, and gets done soon.

These are not the words of some Trump administration official. These are the words of President Obama's former Secretary of Agriculture.

Here is another quote from Dan Glickman:

We have a good agreement. We cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good. This is a good deal for America and particularly a good deal for farmers at this vulnerable time.

Again, this isn't support from some Republican Member of Congress. This is support that is voiced by President Clinton's former Secretary of Agriculture.

What is more, all former Agriculture Secretaries since the Reagan administration have voiced their full support for the USMCA.

We have seen the headlines of endorsements, and one especially caught my attention. The title of a recent op-ed read: "Democrats Should Give Trump a Win on His Trade Deal with Mexico and Canada." Well, this piece wasn't composed by a conservative publication. It was penned by the editorial board of the Washington Post.

Finally, a group of 14 House Democrats sent a letter to Speaker PELOSI last July urging her to take up the USMCA for a vote.

The letter reads: "Canada and Mexico are by far our most important trading partners, and we need to restore certainty in these critical relationships that support millions of American jobs."

Both sides of the aisle agree that the USMCA is a significant win for farmers, ranchers, ag producers, and America's economy as a whole.

Nebraska's farmers and ranchers have maintained patience in these tough times. They deserve to know without a doubt that they will continue to have access to their two largest markets and closest trading partners.

As I said earlier, farmers aren't just thinking about themselves. They are planning for the future generations that will proudly carry on their life's work and continue feeding our world.

Right now, we have an opportunity to come together around a common-sense, bipartisan agreement that will benefit the American people both now and for years to come. Now it is up to Congress to deliver.

I urge Speaker PELOSI to stop needlessly delaying this vote, and I encourage all of my Democrat colleagues not