

and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, I appreciate the opportunity to work with my colleague from Maryland, and I look forward to working with him again in the future. It would be great if we could work together to try to figure out how to provide temporary protected status for Venezuelans and also to fix the program so it continues to work not just for Venezuelans but for people all over the world.

The Democrats know their proposal cannot become law. It lacks support in the Senate, which is why I proposed an amendment that has support and that can actually become law immediately.

My amendment grants TPS to Venezuelans for 18 months. It requires congressional approval for TPS extensions of no more than 18 months at a time. My amendment limits the ability of illegal aliens who have no connection to the TPS designation to benefit from TPS. It ensures that human rights violators who are identified under the Magnitsky Act are not eligible for TPS status. It includes provisions to distinguish that TPS status does not count as an admission for purposes of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Under my amendment, TPS recipients cannot return to the TPS country during the period of designation. Finally, the amendment requires that current TPS designations come up for congressional review 2 years after the enactment of this amendment.

My amendment is the only way to help the Venezuelan people. It is the only proposal that can become law. There is no path forward for the Democrats' plan, and, unfortunately, they know it.

It is clear, now more than ever, that, unfortunately, the Democrats don't want to get anything done on this issue. That is why they are standing in our way. All Republican Senators have signed off on this. Unfortunately, the Democrats have decided to use the Venezuelan community as a political prop instead of working with us to find a solution.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that Nicolas Maduro is killing his citizens. It is a genocide. Who will we be if we turn our backs on a genocide right here in our hemisphere? We cannot. We must help Venezuelan families.

It is also time to reform TPS in this country. Temporary protected status was never meant to be endless. It was meant to help families in need. So let's get the program to work.

I look forward to working with my colleague from Maryland and with all of my colleagues to help the families in

Venezuela and to finally create a long-term solution to TPS. I will not rest until we do.

My colleague Senator RAND PAUL asked that I object to the Senate Democrats' proposal. On behalf of Senator PAUL, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, 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. CRAMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3055

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to offer the following amendments: No. 961, No. 1019, and No. 1067. I further ask unanimous consent that no second-degree amendments be in order to these amendments prior to the votes and that at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, October 28, the Senate vote in relation to these amendments in the order listed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I want to take the next 15 or 20 minutes today to talk about the ongoing situation in Syria and the region surrounding that country.

It is a part of the world that some folks might not be all that familiar with, so let's take a look at the area that I will be discussing today: Syria, the Mediterranean, with Greece up here.

Just north of Syria, we have Turkey. To the southeast of Syria, we have Iraq. Further to the east of Iraq, we have Iran. To the south-southwest of Syria, we have Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan. South of Jordan is Saudi Arabia. Over here we have Egypt, the Red Sea, and Georgia—not the State, the country. That gives us just a little bit of the lay of the land. The focus of my remarks today will be on Syria.

Three years and 4 months ago this week, I stood here on the Senate floor

in front of a map of Syria and spoke of the progress that was about to be made in that country in the battle to degrade and destroy ISIS.

We are going to look at another map. It is pretty much the same area, blown up—Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. The area here in what I call a peach color is where ISIS was running the show or had undue influence.

At this particular point in time, ISIS had been making undeniable progress in building what they called their caliphate, their country, their capital. Again, this is the area they covered at the height of their influence.

ISIS at that time had recruited more manpower than any terrorist group in the world and was also the richest terrorist group in the world. They would literally go into an area of the town or country and loot the banks, empty the vaults, take the cash, take the money, and run.

Through their dominant social media presence, ISIS was attracting some 2,000 foreign fighters per month. That included 10 Americans per month, which would mean over 100 Americans per year on an annual basis. ISIS controlled most of northern Syria, including Raqqa, which it claimed as its capital, and the strategic city of Manbij, which is close by.

ISIS was able to project an image of strength to the world, reeling in potential recruits by touting their victories in the region. You know how everybody wants to be the winner in football, and you see a lot of people wearing Boston Patriots clothing. We will probably see a lot more Nats fans in the months to come and Houston Astros fans as well. But ISIS was projecting an image of strength to the world, and they were reeling in potential recruits by touting their victories in the region and their growing territory.

Three years and four months ago, when I stood here on the Senate floor, progress was actually being made in reversing ISIS's growth. U.S. and Kurdish forces had recaptured Manbij, sending ISIS recruitment tumbling, from about 2,000 fighters a month down to 200. I will say that again. They were recruiting 2,000 a month, and they were down to about 200.

We had found where they kept a lot of their money, not all of it, but we destroyed about one-third of it. ISIS had previously held the strategically important Sunni Triangle in nearby Iraq. But when I spoke on the floor, right here, 3 years ago, in 2016, Iraqi forces recaptured the cities of Tikrit, Fallujah, and Ramadi, and we were poised to make additional gains in the months that followed in the battle against ISIS.

Just over a year later, in 2017, Raqqa was recaptured from ISIS control. Around that time, and in the months that followed, ISIS's sphere of influence undoubtedly diminished by about two-thirds.

I referred to that map already, but we will look at it again. This is where

they were about 3 years and 4 months ago. That is basically where they were. In short order, from there, they lost about two-thirds of the land they were controlling and are down to this point right here.

When I speak of the progress we made, I am not just referring to U.S. forces or the United States alone or one or two of our allies. I am speaking of a coalition—get this—of over 60 nations that would come together to fight the rise of ISIS and prevent it from establishing the caliphate that I referred to earlier.

Each member of the coalition found that it was in their own naked self-interest to join this fight as part of a bigger coalition. Among the forces that contributed the most, though, were—believe it or not—the Syrian Kurds.

If you asked most people, who are the Kurds, where are they from, tell us something about the Kurds, they would have no idea. It turns out, the Kurds are one of the largest ethnic groups in the world without a nation of their own to call their own home. There are 30 million of them. They are largely divided across four countries: Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq.

For decades, the Kurds have sought self-determination and basic rights, something we all want for ourselves and our families. But too often, instead, they have been victimized, attacked, and slaughtered, including by President Erdogan of Turkey.

Over the last several years, though, Kurdish soldiers trained and fought against ISIS alongside of our soldiers as part of the Syrian Democratic Forces. They call themselves the SDF, or the Syrian Democratic Forces. The Kurdish soldiers put their lives at risk to stop ISIS from successfully establishing a caliphate from which to wreak even more havoc around the globe and even here in the United States.

In fact, the Kurdish SDF fighters were the ones carrying out most of the ground operations, while U.S. troops provided support. Their willingness—the willingness of the Kurdish fighters—to risk their lives and shed their blood likely meant that countless American lives were spared.

I am going to say that again. The willingness of Kurdish fighters to risk their lives and shed their blood likely meant that countless American lives were spared.

Some 11,000 Kurdish fighters have been killed in combat while fighting ISIS. Compare that to the four American lives we have lost during the same campaign. Think about that. Eleven thousand Kurdish fighters laid down their lives. Four Americans lost their lives. That is too many, but what an imbalance. We have heard it said often-times: They laid down their lives to spare ours. And that is exactly what happened.

Earlier this month, President Trump abruptly announced that he would be pulling the remaining coalition forces

from Syria, effective immediately. He did not do so after thoughtful consideration of the risks involved to U.S. interests. He did not consult with our allies. As far as I know, he did not consult with our military leadership—certainly not some of the ones retired now who are speaking up, raising their voices. Rather, he did so after a weekend phone call with Turkish President Erdogan.

In the process, he left our Kurdish allies hanging out to dry.

As someone who has actually served this Nation in uniform at a time of war, I have served with coalitions before. Two of the most important factors in building a successful coalition are communication and trust.

Our abrupt abandonment of Kurdish forces and their people will not serve to encourage other countries around the world to risk the lives of their soldiers and join a coalition led by us, the Americans. In fact, what we have done in abandoning the Kurds is going to discourage other nations from deciding to join a coalition with us in the future—certainly in the near future and maybe longer than that.

The decision to abandon our Kurdish allies isn't just morally wrong—and it is. It is not just harmful to our credibility with allies around the globe—and it is harmful. It is a gift to several of our greatest adversaries.

Here is what President Trump's abrupt decision to pull U.S. ground forces from Syria has achieved. He has created almost overnight a power vacuum in which ISIS can regroup and wreak havoc again. According to recent news reports, ISIS fighters are cheering President Trump's decision on social media channels viewed around the world.

Just this week, our Secretary of Defense confirmed that over 100 ISIS prisoners have escaped, adding that the United States does not know where they are today. And what does our President say in response to all of this? He tells us that captured ISIS prisoners are secured. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be true.

And, when presented with the possibility that ISIS prisoners might be released as a result of his hasty withdrawal, what did our President say? This is what he said: "Well, they're going to be escaping to Europe." Think about that. "Well, they're going to be escaping to Europe."

Who do we know in Europe? Do we have friends? Yes, we do—NATO, which we have been a part of for half a century. They are our friends. They are our allies.

Somehow, the idea that that is where the escaped ISIS folks are going to head is OK. Well, it is not OK. Those words, in my view, are disgraceful.

As chairman and ranking member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee for a number of years, I worked with my colleagues—Democrats and Republicans alike—and others to find ways to effectively combat ISIS.

Of course, it was critical to degrade and destroy ISIS extremists overseas on the battlefield, but, unfortunately, in today's day and age, ISIS's message of hate doesn't need a visa and doesn't need a plane ticket to reach our shores. It has been just as important to find ways to counter ISIS's abhorrent and twisted messages in order to prevent the radicalization of American citizens right here at home, in the United States of America.

We worked tirelessly during the Obama administration to reach out to communities across our country and worked with local officials, with faith leaders, and with family members to combat terrorist groups' efforts to radicalize and recruit our own citizens—our own citizens who might be vulnerable to their hateful ideology.

ISIS fighters never have to step foot on American soil to spread their hate and inspire unspeakable violence. For our President to brush off the escape of 100 or more of these prisoners and say it is not our problem because they will go to Europe I think is callous. I think it is thoughtless. It is foolish, and it demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding of the ever-evolving terrorist threats we face in this world today.

President Trump's decision to pull out of Syria without a plan to protect our gains hasn't just energized ISIS fighters there. It has also given Russian President Vladimir Putin a long-desired foothold in the Middle East. Just yesterday, President Putin and Erdogan announced that their forces will jointly establish and patrol a 20-mile-wide safe zone along the Syrian-Turkish border.

I don't know if we can look at this. Here is Syria. Turkey is up here. Close to the Euphrates, there is an area there, about a 20-mile safe zone, that will be patrolled not by the Syrian Kurds but by the folks from Russia and the soldiers from Turkey.

If the Kurds want help fighting Erdogan's ethnic cleansing and chemical attacks, instead of turning to the United States, they now have only another dictator to turn to, and that is Vladimir Putin. And because we left the region without a plan for exit, Mr. Putin has secured an important public relations win of his own.

At least one base where American forces used to work side by side with Kurdish forces in Syria to gather and share critical intelligence regarding ISIS's movements—now it not in our hands, not in the hands of the Syrian Kurds, but it is in Russian hands. You know what they are doing with that change of hands? They are tweeting their videos to prove it and laughing all the way to—I don't know—wherever they go.

If empowering Russia, Erdogan, and ISIS wasn't enough, President Trump's decision to leave the region also creates a golden opportunity for Iranian hardliners to achieve a long-desired goal of their own—that is, to establish

a land bridge across the Middle East in order to further antagonize our allies the Israelis.

President Trump has repeatedly promised to fulfill his campaign promise to end what he calls America's endless wars. We should not be fooled. Not one war has ended during his Presidency. In fact, more troops have actually been deployed to the Middle East than have come home.

Today, roughly 200,000 U.S. troops are deployed all around the globe. Some of those troops are in war zones, in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and a small number remain in Syria. Even more troops remain overseas from legacy missions, in places like Japan, Germany, the Philippines, and Australia. For instance, right now more than 28,000 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea. Just 2 weeks ago, President Trump announced that he would be sending an additional 3,000 troops to Saudi Arabia.

Prior to President Trump's reckless withdrawal from Syria, there were roughly 1,000 American troops stationed in the northeastern corner of that country. Compared to America's military presence elsewhere, that is a small fraction. Think about that. Some 200,000 American troops are spread around the world. Roughly 1,000 of them, which is less than one-half of 1 percent, were serving in this part of the world, in Syria.

In spite of their strategic presence, President Trump chose to abruptly pull a small number of troops out of Syria. As it turns out, with the death of John McCain, I am the last Vietnam veteran serving in the U.S. Senate. I know well what it is like to come home from a long deployment. When I was with my squadron, we deployed overseas 6 months three times to Southeast Asia.

I agree that we cannot afford to entangle our men and women in uniform in endless conflicts around the globe. It is not fair to them, and it is not fair to their families. But what Donald Trump has achieved is not a carefully negotiated cease-fire to shore up the gains we have made against ISIS and to fulfill our commitments to the allies who helped us along the way. Oh, no, make no mistake, this is a retreat.

The last thing I will say is this: I am not alone. In fact, I am far from alone in criticizing this administration's decision with respect to the withdrawal of a small number of troops from Syria.

In the past week, I have been joined by some unlikely colleagues to warn about the dangers of Mr. Trump's Syria policy. We have also heard from top national security officials, past and present—in uniform and out of uniform—who have extensive experience when it comes to American foreign policy and military policy.

Just last week, a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee described the Trump administration's decision to pull American troops out of Syria as—in his words—"out of line" and also as "dangerous."

That Senator also warned that—these are his words—"ISIS is the biggest beneficiary." That is what he said. "ISIS is the biggest beneficiary." Of what? Of the administration's abrupt decision to pull U.S. troops out of Syria and leave our Kurdish allies open to predictable invasion and, unfortunately, likely slaughter by the Turks.

You might be surprised to learn those remarks were made by a Republican colleague from South Carolina, someone who was also in uniform in his life, LINDSEY GRAHAM.

Another one of our colleagues stood right here on the Senate floor this last week and said that President Trump's decision to abandon our Kurdish allies "strikes at American honor." He goes on to say: "What we have done to the Kurds will stand as a bloodstain"—as a bloodstain—"in American history." He went on to say that the ceasefire deal described last week by Vice President PENCE as a victory—and these are words of our colleague—"does not change the fact that America abandoned an ally, adding insult to disonor."

That Senator went on to say:

The administration speaks cavalierly, even flippantly, even as our ally has suffered death from casualty. Their homes have been burned and their families have been torn apart.

Again, those are the words of not a Democratic colleague but a Republican colleague—our friend from Utah, Senator MITT ROMNEY.

Just this past weekend, we were warned by a highly decorated, retired U.S. Marine Corps general, one who served in the Persian Gulf war, one who served in the war in Afghanistan, and one who served in the Iraq war. In his warning, he said that the administration's abrupt withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Syrian-Turkish border will lead to "disarray"—disarray in Syria—and that "ISIS will resurge." Those are not my words, not a Democrat's words, but the words of President Trump's former Defense Secretary, Gen. Jim Mattis, affectionately known as "Mad Dog."

Colleagues, I am not describing a misguided foreign policy here today. I am describing an abandonment of the values that we as Americans have embraced since the founding of our democracy. I am going to say that again. I am not describing a misguided foreign policy—oh, no. I am describing something much bigger than that—an abandonment of the values that we as Americans have embraced since the founding of our democracy.

A bipartisan group of Senators, including myself, have introduced a package of sanctions that ought to be passed and imposed on Turkey. These sanctions are stronger than the ones President Trump imposed on Turkey this week, which he has already, apparently, lifted. He lifted those sanctions as part of the retreat negotiated by his administration, and he lifted those sanctions in the face of evidence that

Turkish forces continue to attack Kurds outside of the agreed-upon safe zone and continue to commit possible war crimes. But even strong sanctions such as those contained in our bill, if passed, would not solve the urgent crisis President Trump has created by abandoning our Kurdish allies.

Here is what the President said in the last week or two: "I alone can fix it."

Well, Mr. President, for once, that might be true. You alone can fix it. After a single phone call with an authoritarian leader, you created this mess, and maybe you alone can reverse that decision. I urge you to do so. In fact, I think we urge you to do so. Don't turn your back on the Kurds. Don't give up on the gains against ISIS that our service men and women, along with our allies, fought for so bravely.

That would be leadership. That would protect our national security. And that is what the American people and our allies look to the President of the United States to do.

Tom Friedman, a noted author and columnist for the New York Times and someone who has been here in the Capitol a number of times, has something he calls the Trump Doctrine. He said the Trump Doctrine is—it goes something like this: Barack built it. I, Trump, broke it. You fix it.

I want to turn the Trump Doctrine on its head and say: No, no, no, Mr. President. You broke it. It can be fixed, and you need to do the fixing.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINES. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Delaware for his comments.

I rise to continue to speak about the U.S. retreat from Syria and our alliance with our Kurdish allies.

The hasty withdrawal of the United States from northern Syria produced vivid and painful pictures of U.S. troops being pelted with stones and rotting vegetables as they walked away from the Kurdish allies they had stood alongside in the fight against ISIS for years—those Kurdish allies who had fought so valiantly with the United States—our best battlefield partners—in the defeat of ISIS.

The Trump retreat has been pitched by the President as a great victory for American foreign policy. It isn't. It is a grave failure that will ultimately make our country less safe. It is paving the way for potential ethnic cleansing. That has been testified to by administration officials.

In the last 2 weeks, 176,000 Kurds—more than half of them children—have been displaced.

President Trump claims that the Kurds understand we are doing them a great service. That is just flatly wrong.

The Trump retreat empowers Russia, empowers Iran, empowers the Syrian dictator, Bashar al-Assad, who is an international pariah because he is responsible for human suffering at an unimaginable scale, and it also empowers

Turkey, which, despite being a NATO member, has undergone a troubling slide toward authoritarianism.

The Trump retreat has led us to abandon a steadfast U.S. ally, the Syrian Kurds. It is more than just abandoning them and walking away from them; the President reached out personally to say that they were no angels, thrashing them on the way out of the door. For what reason?

The Trump retreat has already led to more than 100 ISIS prisoners escaping, according to the testimony of the special Ambassador who has been charged to be the envoy for the region, Ambassador Jeffrey. The President declared that they had “been largely recaptured,” but when Ambassador Jeffrey was asked yesterday about the President’s claim, he stated: “We do not know where they are.”

Based on testimony from military leadership and diplomats—testimony which was just read by Senator CARPER—it is pretty clear that the President has increased the likelihood of a resurgence of ISIS with this move. We hope that does not happen, but it has largely been predicted by our defense leaders.

What is the grand strategy here? If you look at this highly consequential decision, which is literally a life-and-death decision, and you look at how it was made, it becomes pretty clear to me that there wasn’t a grand strategy.

President Trump encouraged a career State Department diplomat, Ambassador Jim Jeffrey, who spent his whole life in this region, to come out of retirement and take a portfolio of responsibility for Syria and the anti-ISIS campaign. Ambassador Jeffrey was charged directly with this task, but Ambassador Jeffrey testified before the Foreign Relations Committee the other day that he was not even asked or consulted about the cause of action that this President took.

Imagine how that would make you feel. You have retired. You are recruited by the President to come and lead the coalition against ISIS, to be responsible for the Syrian portfolio. The President makes a life-and-death decision about the Syrian mission and does not even ask you for your advice about it. This speaks volumes about the chaotic nature of the retreat.

In July, Ambassador Jeffrey announced—and this was good news—that he and the team had convinced Britain and France to add troops to the mission—the anti-ISIS mission in Syria—to deal with this ISIS threat. That was announced 2 to 3 months ago. But what we heard after President Trump’s announcement was that he did not consult with Britain and France, the nations that had made commitments and then bulked up their troop strength in the area. President Macron of France said he heard of President Trump’s decision by tweet.

So when neither the U.S. Ambassador charged with the responsibility of this mission, nor the British and French al-

lies, who are also together with us on the battlefield, were consulted about this, that adds to the sense of chaos.

I believe this: If the administration had come to Congress 3 months ago or 3 weeks ago and said: Here is our proposal. We want to empower Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Assad. We want to raise the risk of ISIS reconstituting. We want to walk away from the Kurds. We want to make other allies wonder about whether we will be loyal to them. And we want to send a message that protecting oil wells is more important than protecting allies—if the administration had come to the Armed Services or Foreign Relations Committee and said “We have an idea. This is what we want to do. What do you think?” I know what we would have done. I think virtually everyone in the body would have asked questions but would have laughed the strategy out of the room.

But the President didn’t come to Congress, didn’t come to the relevant committees to share his thought or his idea about what should be done. Instead, he took the unilateral action, and now we are seeing the consequences of the Trump retreat.

The Trump retreat was promoted at a press conference by the President yesterday with a branding, and the branding was “Mission Accomplished and Promise Kept.” That branding sent a very bizarre, chaotic, and contradictory message: We are protecting oil-fields but not our allies from ISIS. We are pulling out of the region, but we are also putting thousands more troops in Saudi Arabia. We are pulling out of the region, but we have, in fact, added 14,000 more troops to the gulf since May. We are pulling back from the safe zone that we spent months trying to implement, just to put Russia in charge of that safe zone. We are empowering dictators, but we are abandoning allies. We are sending the signal in Saudi Arabia that the reason we are putting troops there is, as the President said, because they will pay for it, sending the message that our military are now mercenaries, that we would go to the country where the country will pay for it regardless of the human rights situation in that country.

The withdrawal has made it very difficult for anybody to think about partnering with us in the future against a threat like ISIS.

The Syrian Kurds and the Iraqi Kurds, by the way, are both very, very strong partners in the battle against ISIS. If ISIS does resurge, the normal reaction would be to go to our best battlefield partners and ask them if they would help us to defeat ISIS. The President has made it virtually impossible for us to go back to the Syrian Kurds and say: OK, well, now can you help us defeat ISIS again? And I think the President’s actions this week have sent a message to other nations as well that when the United States asks you to get on the battlefield, you have to be worried about whether the United

States will abandon you when it has decided your time is up.

I want America—and I know the Presiding Officer does as well because of his background—to be the country that tells the world “You can count on us,” not the country about which the world says “Don’t believe a word they say.”

In my capacity as a member of the Senate Armed Services and the Senate Foreign Relations Committees, I have spoken with a number of Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle about what we can do because I don’t think the President is going to reverse course. But there are things we can do as the article I branch here to repair some of this or at least start on the road to repair.

There is strong bipartisan support for the passage of the Risch-Menendez bill, which provides a path forward. This is a bill that deals with sanctioning Turkey for its behavior and calling the administration forward to present us with the anti-ISIS plan that should exist right now. I urge the Senate to take up that bill and pass it immediately. It has strong bipartisan support.

I further urge the Senate to pass either the House resolution condemning the President’s action or the resolution that Senator MCCONNELL has introduced to condemn the President’s action. I think either or both of those would be strong statements that the Senate could make.

For some reason that has not yet been explained, the administration has refrained from implementing the mandatory CAATSA sanctions against Turkey following Turkey’s purchase of the S-400 missile system from Russia. These are mandatory sanctions. By law, the President was supposed to have implemented them by now.

We have heard from Brett McGurk, who is working in the region, that Vladimir Putin has looked at Americans and said: Hey, look, Turkey bought our system, and you guys haven’t sanctioned Turkey yet, so you are a paper tiger.

The actions of these sanctions are noticed in the region, and the region is wondering: They are mandatory. Yet the United States isn’t implementing the sanctions. Why not?

I call on the administration to reverse this decision and immediately implement the sanctions to send an important message to both Turkey and Russia.

I call on Congress and the administration to be focused on the need for increased humanitarian assistance in the region. The 176,000 Kurds who have been displaced from their land already are likely to be followed by tens or hundreds of thousands more, and we should focus on what we might do in the humanitarian space to assist them. I believe that humanitarian assistance to international NGOs is important and, also, I would argue, humanitarian assistance to the KRG—to the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Naturally, as the Kurds leave the space in northern Syria under attack from Turkey, one of the places they are likely to go is to Kurdistan and northern Iraq. In the first 10 days, nearly 9,000 Kurdish refugees from Syria have crossed the border into Iraq.

So as we are looking to humanitarian assistance to deal with the scope of this crisis created by President Trump's action, I hope we will consider humanitarian support to the KRG as Kurds cross the border.

I call on Congress to pass the bill that has been introduced by Senators WARNER and BLUMENTHAL, which would provide special immigrant visa opportunities for Kurdish translators and others who have worked alongside our military. This is something we have had a good track record of doing with people who supported our troops in Iraq and supported our troops in Afghanistan and then are left in harm's way because of that support. Those on the Kurdish side who have worked together with our troops in northern Syria, I think, should be extended the same special immigrant visa status.

The administration should be asked to come to both Houses of Congress and testify about the plan to prevent a resurgent ISIS. This is something Americans should be afraid of. Maybe the administration has a plan about how they will try to protect against that happening, but whether they have a plan or not, they should come to Congress, and we should ask them about it.

Finally, I want the White House to release the transcript of the call between President Trump and President Erdogan in which this deal was hashed. When I heard the testimony of Ambassador Jeffrey at the hearing yesterday—the testimony was public—that he wasn't consulted and that the British and French, who have just recently put in troops, weren't consulted, I still have real questions about why this decision was made. I believe those questions would largely be answered if the transcript of the call between Presidents Erdogan and Trump were delivered, whether in a classified or other context to Congress, so I call on the White House to release the transcript.

I am going to conclude with this: Along with many of our colleagues today, I gathered here in the Chamber at 10:30 to go over to the memorial service for Elijah Cummings, and it was a powerful one. It was a powerful one. Not many Members of Congress—Senate or House—lie in state in the Capitol, and it was a moving occasion.

I knew Elijah Cummings pretty well, being kind of a next-door neighbor of Virginia and Maryland. Over the years, we did a number of events together. One of the things that Representative Cummings used to say in one of these voices that sounded like it was coming out of the Old Testament—you know, it was a fire-and-brimstone voice—was this powerful, powerful statement: "We are better than this."

He would say that, and when he would say it, he would say it about a

number of circumstances. He said it probably most recently, most vividly, when pictures emerged of children in cages at the border. But he would often say it, and he would say it to criticize actions. It would sound like a tough criticism.

But as some of the eulogists today were mentioning that statement of Representative Cummings, I thought about "We are better than this," what it means, and it suddenly struck me as not a critical statement. It suddenly struck me as an extremely optimistic and positive statement. I hadn't really thought of it that way until I heard it earlier today.

Why do I say it was optimistic and positive? The statement "We are better than this" says that whatever the imperfections of the day, we are really more defined by our ideals than our imperfections. We are more defined by our values than our vices. And, sure, when he would use that statement, he would be criticizing an imperfection of the day—a bad decision or bad policy—but he would be criticizing it by saying that we as a country, we as a Congress, we as a Senate, even we as individuals are actually better than this. Our ideals are better than the way we are acting right now.

If you look at reality, you can define it by its imperfection or you can try to define it by its ideals, and I would like to have a judge who looked at me and judged me by my ideals more than my imperfections, even while calling me to live up to my ideals.

The fact that an Elijah Cummings, who had suffered throughout his life many kinds of second-class treatment of discrimination, even being routed into special ed classes as a kid because people thought he was slow when he was actually really, really gifted, the fact that he would go through life and still believe so strongly that our country's values and ideals were a more accurate reflection of who we are than our imperfections and vices is something that I found pretty inspirational as I thought about his life.

I do believe we are better than this with respect to this particular issue. I think we are better than abandoning battlefield allies. I think we are better than empowering authoritarian dictatorships. I think we are better than suggesting we care more about oil than we care about people. I think we are better than facilitating ethnic cleansing of a proud population, including kids. I think we are better than this.

So in the spirit of Representative Cummings, I am going to define us as a nation, us as a Senate, us as individuals more by our ideals than by our imperfect actions and then call us to live up to it. There are concrete steps we can take—some of which I have outlined—that I think will be more in tune with who we actually are and the ideals we hold.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. HARRIS. Mr. President, I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall vote No. 332, the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 457, Justin Reed Walker, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky.

I was absent, but had I been present, I would have voted no on rollcall No. 333 the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 457, Justin Reed Walker, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky. •

CUBA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the travel section of the New York Times on Sunday, October 6, 2019, included a lengthy article about the extraordinary music of Cuba and the rich culture that has developed over many generations around the creation and performance of music in that country. The article is too long to insert into the RECORD, but I encourage all Senators to read it as it describes in colorful detail the unique creativity, ingenuity, and complexity of Cuban music that derives from the infinite variety of sounds, instruments, artistry, and talents of Cuban musicians drawing on their African, Haitian, and European heritage.

I mention this because it is illustrative of the many aspects of Cuban society today that Americans should be able to experience for themselves. The Cuban people, who endure many hardships, are as resilient, ingenious, and hard-working as any people I have met. Despite an economy broken by mismanagement that discourages private initiative, a one-party political system that punishes dissent, racial, and gender inequality, and only dreams for a better future, they know how to enjoy life's pleasures and to make strangers feel welcome.

Unfortunately, rather than encouraging Americans to travel to Cuba to experience Cuban society and build relations with the Cuban people, as we do with people living under other autocratic governments, President Trump has slammed the door.

Egged on by a handful of Cuban-American hardliners in the White House, the State Department, and Congress—few, if any, of whom have ever set foot in Cuba—the President has adopted a bankrupt approach toward that country that is steeped in hypocrisy.

These are the same people who for years have unreservedly supported