

Putin is back in the driver's seat in Syria, with leverage over all sides."

Mr. President, it is even worse than that. Let me recount some recent news with regard to actions by Vladimir Putin.

President Trump's transgression goes beyond simply allowing Russia to fill a vacuum. On October 13, just 2 days before Anne Gearan's Washington Post story, the New York Times reported that "the Russian Air Force has repeatedly bombed hospitals in Syria in order to crush the last pockets of resistance to President Bashar al-Assad."

The Times published evidence in that story that the Russians bombed four Syrian hospitals in a 12-hour period in May of this year. During the assault, the Kafr Nabl Surgical Hospital in Idlib Province was struck four times in 30 minutes. Let me say that again. A hospital was struck four times in 30 minutes. Dozens of hospitals and clinics in Idlib Province have been struck since, and Syrian medical workers live in constant fear of the next strike.

Russia continues to act with impunity. Not only did it bomb another hospital in Idlib last week, Russia is using its sway at the United Nations Security Council—where U.S. leadership has diminished significantly under this administration—to limit the scope and the impact of a U.N. inquiry into these bombings.

Such atrocities go beyond the pale of violating the Geneva Conventions and the laws of war; they demonstrate just how ruthless Putin and his regime are and the lengths they are willing to go to assert Russia's influence in the Middle East. The tragedy is, this administration is allowing it to happen. Under this administration, we have seen U.S. leadership erode and multilateral institutions deteriorate to the point where the U.N. is powerless to hold Russia accountable for these atrocities.

I cannot emphasize enough that this administration is not only failing the American people with regard to our relationship with Russia and national security interests, but it is also making us less safe by allowing unspeakable atrocities to occur against innocent civilians—all on our watch.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. President, I will be brief because I know I only have about 5 minutes before we have to move on, but I want to turn to some brief comments about the courageous public servants whom we have watched and will continue to watch testify before the House Intelligence Committee both last week and again this week in the impeachment inquiry.

We have heard from George Kent, Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Yovanovitch, and today, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman and others, and my remarks go out to do justice to all those who will testify for their courage. I want to make some brief comments.

These individuals and so many others are putting their careers and reputa-

tions on the line to testify publicly in defense of U.S. national security, moral leadership, and our democratic institutions. It is outrageous—and that is an understatement—that they have been subjected to partisan attacks—public servants who have sacrificed so much for our Nation. In the case of the diplomats, the diplomats have been attacked without any support or defense from Secretary of State Pompeo or other senior Department of State officials.

We should all be inspired by these and countless other public servants who work to protect and serve the United States every day. When I reflect upon their service to our country and their integrity, I am reminded of just one line from "America the Beautiful: "O beautiful for patriot dream, That sees beyond the years." One of the dreams of a patriot, of course, is to see beyond our own circumstances, to dream about a better future by upholding our institutions and by serving the rule of law, our democracy, and our Constitution.

I will skip over all of the information we already know about the service of these Ambassadors and just conclude with some comments about what happened today.

Today, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman, before questioning by the committee Members, was going through his experience. I will go through it briefly: infantry officer, foreign area officer specializing in European and Eurasian political military affairs, political military affairs officer, serving on the National Security Council, and serving our country in combat and paying the price of being wounded in combat.

At the end of his statement today, Lieutenant Colonel Vindman talked about his father. He said:

His courageous decision [to come to this country] inspired a deep sense of gratitude in my brothers and myself and instilled in us a sense of duty and service. All three of us served or are currently serving in the military. Our collective military service is a special part of our family's story in America.

He went on to say:

I am grateful for my father's brave act of hope 40 years ago and for the privilege of being an American citizen and public servant, where I can live free of fear for mine and my family's safety.

He contrasted that with what happens in Russia. I think it is a good reminder for all of us.

Let me conclude with these thoughts. It is appalling to see individuals such as Lieutenant Colonel Vindman who dedicated their entire lives to the safety and security of the United States be smeared by the President and by his attack dogs who are more concerned about tweets and FOX News headlines than protecting our Nation's domestic foundations.

Nothing the President has said or done in his nearly 3 years as President convinces me he has any understanding of public service. Looking beyond the current impeachment inquiry, this ad-

ministration's blatant disregard and disrespect for career diplomats has had a grave impact on the State Department and our National Security Agency's ability to recruit the next generation of talented, committed public servants who promote U.S. interests abroad.

I will not allow this administration's continuing assault on our diplomats to undermine, devalue, or dishonor their service or the service of future patriots who choose to make a career of serving and protecting our Nation.

The Ambassadors and officials who testified last week, as well as today—others, including Lieutenant Colonel Vindman—have lived honorable and dutiful lives in service to the United States of America. We owe them our deepest gratitude and appreciation for their integrity and commitment to American values. These are real American heroes who, despite the President's bullying and harassment, have stood up in defense of our democratic institutions and the values the Founders fought for to guide our Nation.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

WIND PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT

MR. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to talk about the wind production tax credit. This is a subject that I've talked about before. The Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. TOOMEY, will, I believe, come soon to talk on the same subject.

The wind production tax credit is so generous with taxpayers' money that wind developers can actually give away their electricity for free and still make a profit. Let me say that again. I am talking today about the wind production tax credit, which is a tax subsidy—taxpayer dollars—given to wind developers, and it is so generous that the developers can actually, in some cases, give away their electricity for free and still make a profit.

That wind production tax credit has been extended 11 times. It has been on the books for more than 25 years. This was a tax credit that was supposed to jump-start a new industry—that's 25 years of jump-starting. Four years ago, Congress agreed to end it. We thought that was it. In doing so, Congress asked taxpayers to provide another \$24 billion, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation, to extend the wind production tax credit—\$24 billion more in subsidies for another 5 years and gradually phase out the credit. That is what we thought we did 4 years ago. We would spend \$24 billion more in exchange for phasing out and ending the wind production tax credit. This is on top of the nearly \$10 billion taxpayers paid between 2008 and 2015 and the billions more the taxpayers have paid since the wind production tax credit was created in 1992. That was supposed to be the end of the wind production tax credit 4 years ago. Remember, it

was supposed to jump-start a new industry. President Obama's Energy Secretary said years ago that wind is already a mature industry. That was during the Obama administration.

Now some Members of Congress are trying to break the agreement of 4 years ago to end the wind production tax credit. Earlier this summer, the House Ways and Means Committee reported legislation that extends that credit through the end of 2020. This huge amount of money is not the only thing wrong with that proposal.

First, the wind production tax credit undercuts reliable electricity like nuclear power. This is called negative pricing, which is when wind developers have such a big subsidy that they can give away their electricity and still make money. If you are a wind developer, for every kilowatt hour of electricity one of these 40-story-high wind structures produces, the taxpayers will pay you up to 2.3 cents, which in some markets is more than the cost of the wholesale value of each kilowatt hour of electricity. Negative pricing such as this distorts the marketplace. It puts at risk more reliable forms of energy such as nuclear power, which produces 60 percent of all the carbon-free electricity in the United States. In contrast, wind produces about 19 percent of all the carbon-free electricity in the United States. I think it is important to produce carbon-free electricity. I believe climate change is a problem and that humans are a cause of the problem.

Why would we undercut the production of nuclear power—which is 60 percent of our carbon-free electricity—by the negative pricing of this big, expensive wind production tax credit? With nuclear power available, expecting a country the size of the United States to operate on windmills is the energy equivalent of going to war in sailboats.

Second, in my view, windmills destroy the environment rather than save it. You could run these 40-story structures from Georgia to Maine to produce electricity, scarring the entire eastern landscape or you could produce the same amount of electricity with eight nuclear power plants. If you did run these giant structures from Georgia to Maine, you would still need natural gas or nuclear power to produce electricity when the wind is not blowing, which is most of the time.

There is a much better way to spend the dollars that are available for clean energy. Instead of subsidizing wind developers, the United States could use that money to double the nearly \$6.6 billion that the Federal Government spends on basic energy research to make truly bold breakthroughs that will help us provide cleaner, cheaper energy and raise family incomes.

Earlier this year, I came to the Senate floor and called for a New Manhattan Project for Clean Energy, a 5-year project with 10 grand challenges that will use American research and tech-

nology to put our country and the world firmly on a path toward cleaner, cheaper energy. Specifically, I encouraged funding breakthroughs in advanced nuclear reactors, natural gas, carbon capture, better batteries, greener buildings, electric vehicles, cheaper solar, fusion, advanced computing, and doubling energy research funding. All of that is a better use of funding than more funding for wind developers, which is so generous that in some cases they can give away their electricity and still make a profit. Let wind energy go where we said it should go in 2015; let it go unsubsidized into the free market. That is where we thought we sent it 4 years ago, and that is where it should go.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I want to join my colleague from Tennessee in explaining why we ought to allow this deal to stand—the deal that was struck some years ago to phase out these incredibly inefficient subsidies.

I thank my colleague from Tennessee for his leadership on this issue. As you know, this is a very large tax subsidy. The government is already set to spend about \$67 billion in energy tax subsidies just over the next 5 years, and we should be very clear about this: These subsidies lead to a lower standard of living. When we choose to take an inefficient form of energy and throw a lot of money at it, it just lowers the standard of living. We have less resources available for all the other things we could be doing with that money.

As my colleague from Tennessee mentioned, the wind production tax credit began in 1992 for the very straightforward, simple reason that it couldn't compete. It is completely economically uncompetitive. The idea is, we will have this temporary subsidy to enable the wind production to reach an economy of scale, reach a maturity in the industry that would allow it to compete, and the consensus at the time was that ought to be achieved by about 1999. After about 7 years of taxpayer subsidies, the industry should be on its feet, should be competitive, and there would be technological improvements and everything would be fine. That was 20 years ago. We have been subsidizing it ever since.

We extended this program 11 times. The wind component of all of our energy subsidies is about \$25 billion over a 5-year period, and they still can't compete. The reason it can't compete is because it is just extremely expensive to build the electricity-generating capacity if it is a windmill. It is much more expensive than alternative forms of energy. The cost of building wind capacity versus natural gas, for instance, is pretty stark. It costs less than \$1,000 per kilowatt of capacity for a natural gas-fired powerplant. It costs over \$1,600 per kilowatt for wind production.

Obviously, after the production is done, windmills don't require ongoing

fuel. Amazingly enough, that savings is not enough to ever recoup the huge amount of capital you have to lay out upfront to build this very, very expensive technology. You don't have to take my word for it. Warren Buffett had something to say about this. He knows something about investments. He knows something about economic efficiency. Warren Buffett said:

We get a tax credit if we build a lot of wind farms. That is the only reason to build them. They don't make sense without the tax credit.

That is the reality we have. It is compounded by the fact, of course, that wind energy is inherently unreliable. This will come as no surprise to my colleagues. You don't generate electricity from a windmill unless the wind is blowing. Unfortunately, it is just a fact of nature that wind generation tends to peak in the middle of the night and early morning hours when our energy needs are at their lowest.

It is very hard to store electricity, so we end up with this bizarre situation that the Senator from Tennessee alluded to, where sometimes the wind farms are generating tremendous amounts of electricity, when no one needs electricity, because there is a wind storm in the middle of the night, but because they are so heavily subsidized by taxpayers, the wind farm companies are willing to pay the electric grid operator to take their electricity. Normally, you sell your electricity. They actually will pay money to have the electrical grid take their electricity. This is extremely disruptive for the conventional sources of electricity, whether it is nuclear or gas or coal, because they have to be there all the time to adjust for the wild fluctuations that come from wind-generated electricity. It is very hard for them to have a vehicle business model when occasionally the product they produce has a negative value. It is just bizarre.

I want to stress another element of this, which is the original rationale. The original rationale was that this was a new industry. It was going to need some help getting on its feet and getting established, and after some period of time, it would be able to compete on its own. This is no longer even remotely the case. In fact, there is a tremendous amount of wind-generated electricity in America because these subsidies have been so big for so long.

In 1999, we had only 4½ billion kilowatt hours of electricity generated from wind. In 2018, we had 275 billion kilowatt hours—a 6,000-percent increase in two decades. It is now 7 percent of all U.S. electricity generation because these subsidies are so expensive.

I think it was, in part, because of the enormous growth of this industry and the maturity of it—the decades-long history—that Congress finally decided back in 2015 that we would phase out these subsidies. We wouldn't do it immediately, but we would phase them

out by 2019. So 20 years after the subsidies were supposed to end, we are now on a glide path to phasing this out and having these taxpayer subsidies expire at the end of this year.

At the time the Wind Energy Association looked at this in 2015, they said: “Growth in the wind industry is expected to remain strong when the PTC is fully phased out.” PTC is the production tax credit. That is what we are talking about. Lo and behold, we get to the end of 2019, or nearly so, and, sure enough, some folks in Congress are saying: Well, let’s not stick to that deal. Let’s continue this subsidy even longer. So we had a markup in the Ways and Means Committee of the other Chamber to add yet another year’s extension to the wind tax credit that will cost another \$2 billion.

I just don’t think we should break the deal that we had in 2015. This is an inefficient use of taxpayers’ money. This makes our economy less efficient. This lowers our standard of living and is disruptive to the ongoing base sources of electricity that we need across the country.

The last point I want to make is that it is not as though we have an energy shortage in this country. It is not as though we are going to have to turn to hostile foreign sources to get the energy to replace if we don’t continue heavily subsidizing wind production. The fact is we have staggering amounts of natural gas—enough natural gas to serve our electricity generation needs for the indefinite future. In 2017, the United States became a net exporter of natural gas. It is a huge, growing source of electricity generation that is clean, that is reliable, and that is incredibly abundant. We came to the right conclusion some years ago. Now is our opportunity to stick to it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Texas.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, history has taught us that the closer you get to election day, the harder it gets to pass legislation here in the Congress. It is hard, anyway, by design. You have to pass a bill through committees in the House and in the Senate. Both bodies have to pass a bill if they are different. They have to reconcile those in a conference committee. Then, you have to negotiate with the White House in order to get the President’s signature. So, by design, it is hard to pass legislation, but it shouldn’t be this hard.

With less than a year to go before the 2020 election, we are racing against the clock. We started this year with bipartisan ambitions to address healthcare costs, to bolster international trade, and to get the appropriations process back on track and avoid unnecessary government shutdowns. Yet, somewhere along the way, politics hijacked the process.

Our colleagues across the aisle decided that no matter how critical legislation may be, foiling President Trump

was even more important. They are so outraged by the President and so consumed by his every word and every tweet that they have brought the work of this body to a screeching halt in an effort to remove him from office less than a year before the next general election. It seems they have no desire whatsoever to pass legislation that would benefit the American people, let alone any urgency to get things moving. The only thing our Democratic colleagues seem to care about is stopping the President from getting anything that could be construed as a win.

Over in the House, the Democrats have put legislating on the back burner and are spending their days trying to nullify the results of the 2016 election. They are slow-walking negotiations on the National Defense Authorization Act, which has passed every year without fail since 1961. Their negotiations with the administration over the USMCA—that is the successor to NAFTA, which helped to benefit the employment of roughly 13 million Americans—have kept farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers in limbo for months. Along with the necessary funding to help to make up for the lack of funds in the highway trust fund, they have also complicated efforts to get a long-term highway bill reauthorization passed.

Despite the partisan frenzy in the House, I have always believed the Senate should do its best to stay above the fray, but the minority leader has proven me wrong. In fact, last week, I came to the floor to ask unanimous consent to pass a bill that Senator RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, of Connecticut, a Democrat, and I, a Republican, introduced together. Incredibly, this bill passed unanimously out of the Committee on the Judiciary.

Our legislation is designed to do what all here in Washington say they want to do, which is to reduce drug prices—in this case, by stopping drug makers from gaming the patent system. Our bill strikes a delicate balance of protecting innovation, which is very, very important—we must not lose sight of that—while it increases competition, and you know competition helps to bring down prices. As an added bonus, it would lower Federal spending by more than a half a billion dollars over 10 years. That is not even talking about what it would do in the non-governmental sector for sayings.

Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have done what you are expected to do here in a legislative body, which is to work hard to build consensus and come up with a bill that could gain bipartisan support. By any measure, we have succeeded in doing that, as it has a dozen bipartisan cosponsors. As I mentioned, when this legislation was reviewed by the Committee on the Judiciary—a committee that, notably, can be pretty contentious at times—the committee passed it unanimously. Every Republican and every Democrat voted for it.

I had hoped that would have been some indication that this bill would

have quickly passed the full Senate when brought to the Senate floor. Apparently, the minority leader, the Senator from New York, had other plans in mind, because when I, along with Senator BLUMENTHAL, came to the floor last week to try to get this legislation passed, he objected—hence, the Schumer graveyard.

On November 18, 2019, when referring to S. 1416, regarding the lowering of drug prices, Senator SCHUMER said: “Democrats are happy and eager to work on those issues.”

One thing I have learned around here is that it is not just what people say but what they do that counts, and he objected to this virtually unanimously supported bill, on a bipartisan basis, to lower drug prices. He actually called it a good bill. He said it was well-intentioned, but he said there were other ideas that had to be included before he would lift his objection. So he doesn’t have any objection to our bill. He understands it is a good bill but that it may not be as comprehensive as he would like.

Another thing I have learned in my time in the Senate is that if you demand everything and are not willing to compromise, you are going to end up with nothing. Apparently, that is what the Democratic leader is happy with, including for his constituents in New York, by the way, who will have to pay more money out-of-pocket as a result of his objection to this commonsense bill.

I would hope that he would talk to his own Members who have cosponsored this bill. Most notably, the Democratic whip, Senator DURBIN, of Illinois, has cosponsored the bill as well as Senator MURRAY, of Washington, who is the ranking member on the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. They are both cosponsors of this bill that the Democratic leader objected to.

While all Senators have said they want to address rising drug prices, Senator SCHUMER has the distinction of being the only Senator to have actually blocked a bill that would do exactly that. Why would he do that? He claims—I think, mistakenly so—that passing my bill would somehow render the Senate incapable of passing any other drug pricing legislation. That is, obviously, ridiculous and untrue.

I happen to sit not only on the Committee on the Judiciary but on the Committee on Finance. There is a significant bipartisan Committee on Finance bill, together with the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee’s bill, that has been produced by Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY. Both of those contain many good ideas. I wish we had the time and the bandwidth to debate and vote on those on the Senate floor and in the House. But for the fact that our House colleagues are so obsessed with impeachment and seem incapable of doing anything else, I think we could do that.

Of course, even though the Democratic leader himself is the reason this