

Soleimani himself. Intelligence provided to senior administration officials prior to the strike confirmed that Soleimani had posed a defined threat to the United States.

When we speak about Iran in the context of conflict versus deterrence, we are not referring to a government or a military organization. It is important to note and for the American people to know that Iran is the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism. Do you know who it points that terrorism to? Isn't it interesting. Iran tends to have little bywords. It says: This is our goal—to destroy America, to destroy Israel. That is what Iran has been up to. It has nurtured a proxy network that has helped it to claw its way into the heads of regional leaders who are either too weak or who are wholly unwilling to resist those overtures.

Relationships with Russia and with Bashar al-Assad in Syria have kept Iranian leaders a part of mainstream conversations about national security.

Hezbollah in Lebanon is a close friend of Iran, and their support of militias and Houthi rebels in Yemen adds to the aura of chaos around Iran's activities.

So what does all of this have to do with a targeted strike on one man? That one man has spent a lifetime doing exactly what he was doing the day he died—using violence and intimidation to bring Shiite ideology into prominence and, to quote the notorious Ayatollah Khamenei, “end the corrupting presence of America in the Middle East.”

That is what they thought. Those are their comments, their words—not mine, not the President's, not the military's, not the intel's—the Ayatollah's. That is what he said.

Soleimani took to the frontlines with the Revolutionary Guard in 1979. That may trigger some thoughts of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and American diplomats and citizens that were held hostage.

Soleimani was not a new arrival to the terrorist community. Sometime between 1997 and 1998 he was named commander of the Quds Force. Under his leadership, the Revolutionary Guard has gained control of over 20 percent of Iran's economy, and the Quds Force has extended its influence to all Gulf States, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.

He controlled Iran's intervention in support of Assad in Syria and was the primary architect of Hezbollah in Lebanon. They have built up and trained scores of Hezbollah and Houthi fighters, as well as Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, and those Iraqi militias killed more than 600 U.S. troops during the Iraq War.

Soleimani made much of his militaristic role, but he was a general in name only. He hid behind a uniform while designing, devising, conducting, and advising terror plots, and that is what earned him a spot on the list of people sanctioned by the EU, the

United States, and the U.N. He wasn't a bureaucrat. He was not one of many respected generals.

The Ayatollah called him a living martyr in his lifetime, but I intend to call him exactly what he was—a ruthless terrorist and a shameless, even proud, engineer of hatred, death, and destruction. That is his legacy.

His tendency toward violence as a default was thrown into full relief when President Trump withdrew from that Iranian nuclear deal, just as I said a moment ago.

In early May of last year, the intel indicated an increased threat from Tehran, and between May and September, Iran and its proxies perpetrated more than 80 violent attacks in the region—80—on us and our allies, 80 attacks. They attacked multiple tankers and commercial vessels. They downed an American drone. They took out 5 percent of the world's oil supply. Now we find out that they have taken out a jetliner.

They used their own drones to attack a Saudi airport. A suicide bomber murdered four Afghans and wounded four U.S. troops traveling in a convoy in eastern Kabul.

Soleimani was very confident, but perhaps he should have thought a little harder about the increased level of vulnerability he had built into his expanding network, because he didn't die in a hidden bunker or behind the walls of a fortified compound. He died in public while traversing the Middle East, defining impunity and even taking selfies with proxy terrorists. He did every bit of this in violation of U.N. resolutions. He died because his aggression morphed into a pattern of arrogance and violent escalation that U.S. officials could not, in good conscience, continue to allow.

This month Iranian officials lost their chief terrorist, but they have gained an opportunity, and, I will tell you, the ball is in their court.

Their retaliatory strikes against our shared bases in Iraq did nothing to repair their image as a belligerent and deeply vulnerable regime. If their lack of precision was calculated, no one got the intended message.

The Iranians are now left with two choices, and they are theirs. Pick one. We hope they choose well.

Option No. 1, they can come to the table and behave like a normal country. They are a country rich in resources and smart, educated people. Come to the table and behave like a normal country in the community of nations and allow deterrence to make a comeback.

Option No. 2, they can risk being reminded that the United States will defend to the death the redline that separates justice from chaos, and the American people are going to make certain that we continue to go after monsters who crusade as the declared enemies of freedom.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

TRIBUTE TO LAUREN OPPENHEIMER

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I want to take a few moments to recognize an individual, Lauren Oppenheimer, who, after nearly 5 years as an invaluable member of my team, has recently moved on to begin the next chapter of her career. We all on Team Merkley are very sad to see her go, but we do feel extraordinarily fortunate that she hasn't gone far—just over to Senator JONES' office on the other side of the Hart building. So Oregon's loss has been Alabama's gain.

Lauren joined my team in 2015, back when I was a member of the Banking Committee, to handle that important portfolio. It was a position that she was extremely qualified for, having a wealth of experience working on those issues in both the House and at the Center for American Progress. But then a seat opened on the Foreign Relations Committee, and I had to turn in my credentials for Banking in order to take that Foreign Relations position.

Well, we knew that that really kind of undermined the vision of why Lauren had come to our team, to really take on that set of banking issues. It would not be an understatement to say it was not a completely thrilling day when I shared this news with her.

But being the dedicated team member that she is, she willingly and graciously took on a new role within the team and a whole new portfolio of issues to work on—issues like election reform and telecom, judicial nominations, rules reform. It might not have been the job that she signed up for, but she excelled at it nonetheless. She excelled because she is extremely smart and talented and because she is passionate about her work, and she threw herself into this new set of issues.

I mean it when I say she is passionate. A quick conversation about Fintech can last for hours, as she excitedly informs you about all of the recent developments in that emerging industry—an industry, by the way, that I had hardly heard of before Lauren came to my team.

Martin Luther King, Jr., once said: “Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable.” It requires “the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.” Well, Lauren is certainly one of those dedicated and passionate individuals, and throughout her time on Team Merkley, she has helped move our country forward in ways large and small.

For years she has worked on ensuring the implementation of the Volcker rule, a key part of the Dodd-Frank Act, which closed the Wall Street casino by separating old-fashioned banking from high-risk, high-leverage bets on the future prices of stocks and exchange rates and interest rates and commodities—bets that placed our entire banking system and economy at risk.

Lauren wrote the bipartisan SAFE Banking Act, which had its hearing in the Banking Committee just a couple of months ago, to ensure that legal

cannabis and hemp businesses have access to the same banking services as any other business. She established the Senate Cannabis Working Group to coordinate the Senate's efforts around this issue.

She has worked to ensure the integrity of our judicial system by vetting the nominations for judgeships and, in one case, produced significant insights and records that resulted in the Senate rejecting the nomination of Ryan Bounds for the 9th Circuit.

In her spare time, Lauren has been fighting to save our democracy. Earlier this year she created my "Blueprint For Democracy" to introduce six specific bills, and she was the point person on my team for finalizing the Senate version of the For the People Act, a comprehensive election reform bill which takes on anti-democratic practices such as gerrymandering, voter suppression, and dark money.

But beyond those accomplishments and many others that I haven't mentioned, she made one contribution that I will always remember and deeply appreciate. As many are aware, I spent a significant amount of time over the last year and a half shining a light on the Trump administration's policy of cruelty toward immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers on our southern border.

Even though immigration issues are not in her portfolio, it was Lauren who inspired me to get involved. I was reading the speech by former Attorney General Jeff Sessions—a speech labeled his "zero tolerance" speech—and the name didn't strike me as unexpected. But when I read the details, it sounded as if the plan was to discourage refugees from coming to our border by deliberately traumatizing children, to rip them out of their parents' arms.

I refused to believe that any American administration would ever actually do this, and, as I was expressing the belief that no American administration would ever resort to hurting children as a strategy to deter immigration and would not resort to a strategy of hurting children to do anything that is not acceptable under any moral code or set of ethics or religious standards, it was Lauren who said: There is one way to find out, and that is to go down to the border.

So I went that next weekend, that next Sunday, and became the first Member of Congress to see the children being sorted into cages after being separated from their parents and to be turned away from any conversation in front of a former Walmart where I had heard that hundreds of separated boys were being held.

The video of that really sent a message to the entire Nation of what this administration was hiding, but the fact that I was there at that processing center and the fact that I was there at that former Walmart, seeking to find out what was going on with those hundreds of boys who had been taken from their parents, was because Lauren

Oppenheimer said: The best way to find out is to go down to the border yourself.

Thank you, Lauren, for playing such a critical role in all of these efforts. You are such a valued member of our team, and you are still valued as a member of our team. You will always be a member of our team, even as you go on to work for our colleague from Alabama.

Our office notices your absence, without the energy and enthusiasm emanating from your desk and your unceasing willingness to take on new challenges and your very valuable work to mentor other team members.

Know that all of us on the team wish you the very best as you continue to fight for a better world in this new chapter of your career.

I am excited that you are returning to your world of expertise, the world of banking. I may be calling you now and then to get your insights on that set of issues that you know so well.

All of us look forward to seeing the insights and understanding you will help us gain from your perspective when you are fully immersed in the banking world. It will be valuable to all of us in the Senate and valuable to our Nation.

I thank you for your service.

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

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

VOTE ON RAY NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Ray nomination?

Mr. WYDEN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 10 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Barrasso	Fischer	Portman
Blackburn	Gardner	Risch
Blunt	Graham	Roberts
Boozman	Grassley	Romney
Braun	Hawley	Rounds
Burr	Hoeben	Rubio
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cassidy	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Collins	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shelby
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Cramer	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Loeffler	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Toomey
Daines	McSally	Wicker
Enzi	Murkowski	Young
Ernst	Paul	

NAYS—44

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Jones	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Sinema
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Udall
Duckworth	Menendez	Van Hollen
Durbin	Merkley	Warner
Feinstein	Murphy	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murray	Wyden
Harris	Peters	

NOT VOTING—6

Alexander	Moran	Sanders
Booker	Perdue	Warren

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 498.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Peter Gaynor, of Rhode Island, to be Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.