

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 329.

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

The clerk will report the nomination. The legislative clerk read the nomination of Matthew H. Solomson, of Maryland, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

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.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Matthew H. Solomson, of Maryland, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, Mike Rounds, Lamar Alexander, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, John Thune, Cindy Hyde-Smith, John Boozman, Tom Cotton, Chuck Grassley, Kevin Cramer, Steve Daines, Todd Young, John Cornyn.

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. 462.

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

The clerk will report the nomination. The legislative clerk read the nomination of Eleni Maria Roumel, of Maryland, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

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.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby

move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Eleni Maria Roumel, of Maryland, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, Mike Rounds, Lamar Alexander, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, John Thune, Cindy Hyde-Smith, John Boozman, Tom Cotton, Chuck Grassley, Kevin Cramer, Steve Daines, Todd Young, John Cornyn.

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. 525.

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

The clerk will report the nomination. The legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael George DeSombre, of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Thailand.

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.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Michael George DeSombre, of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, James M. Inhofe, John Barrasso, Roy Blunt, Todd Young, Shelley Moore Capito, Michael B. Enzi, Lisa Murkowski, John Cornyn, Steve Daines, Lindsey Graham, Chuck Grassley, Josh Hawley, Roger F. Wicker, Marsha Blackburn.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls be waived.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IRAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it has been 4 days since the United States carried out a military operation that killed Major General Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force. In the days since, I have become increasingly alarmed about the strike, a strike that

was carried out with insufficient transparency, without consultation of Congress, and without a clear plan for what comes next.

President Trump had promised to keep the United States out of endless wars in the Middle East. The President's actions, however, have seemingly increased the risk that we could be dragged into exactly such a war. It is indicative of President Trump's foreign policy record, which is riddled by chaotic, uninformed, erratic, and impulsive decision-making without adequate consideration for the consequences.

In just about every foreign policy area President Trump touches, we are worse off than we were before he started with it. Whether it is with China, North Korea, Syria, Russia, the President has careened from one impulsive action to the next, with no coherent strategy. North Korea today—despite what President Trump said, we don't have to worry about them—is a greater nuclear threat than they have ever been. Trump's actions have been disastrous. North Korea has more nuclear weapons, and, by all reports, has either developed or is very close to developing an ICBM that can hit the U.S. mainland. That is a result of President Trump's bumbling.

The situation in Syria is much worse than before. Doing what he did in Syria, pulling out those troops, made no sense to anybody, even the most hawkish foreign policy people we have, and every time the President seems to deal with Putin, Putin seems to come out ahead. Looking at the President's chaotic and rudderless foreign policy in hotspots around the globe, it is hard to conclude that any of the situations are better off than when the President took office 3 years ago. His policies seem to be characterized by erratic, impulsive, and often egotistical behavior, with little regard to a long-term strategy that would advance the interests of the United States.

At times like this, it is essential for Congress to provide a check on the President and assert our constitutional role in matters of war and peace. In my view, President Trump does not—does not—have authority to go to war with Iran. There are several important pieces of legislation that seek to, again, assert Congress's authority and prerogative on these matters.

Senator Kaine has a War Powers Resolution that would force a debate and vote in Congress to seek to prevent further escalation of hostilities with Iran. That resolution will be privileged, so it will have to come to the floor. My colleagues, we are going to vote on it.

Senator Sanders has introduced a bill that would block funding for the war with Iran. I am supportive of both Senator Kaine's and Senator Sanders' efforts, and I urge the Senate to consider both in the coming days.

Additionally, the Trump administration must start acting with greater transparency. By law, the Trump administration must make a notification

to Congress when it conducts a military operation like the one last Friday. That is known as a War Powers Act notification. Unusually, the Trump administration made the notification on Saturday, after the action occurred, and then they did it in a completely classified format.

Let me be clear. An entirely classified notification—in the case of this particular military operation—is simply not appropriate, and there appears to be no legitimate justification for classifying this notification.

Ranking Member MENENDEZ and I sent a letter to the President urging declassification. It is critical that national security matters of such importance—war and peace and the possibility of another “endless war” in the Middle East—that knowledge of the actions and justification should be shared with the American people in a timely manner. It is Americans who will be asked to pay for such a war if it occurs. It is American soldiers who will bravely risk their lives once again.

The reason the Founding Fathers gave Congress war-making authority is very simple: They were afraid of an overreaching Executive. They wanted to make sure that any act as important as war—war and peace—be discussed in an open manner by the Congress so it could be vetted, so questions could be asked, so a small, insular group—and the President’s group seems even more and more insular because anyone of strength and courage, people like Mattis and McMaster, who disagrees with the President because he is so erratic leaves, leaving a bunch of “yes” people who seem to want to do whatever the President wants. That means having a debate in Congress where questions are asked and coming to the American people so that people can hear a justification and see if it is actually a valid one is vital.

The administration still has to answer several very crucial questions about their actions last week. Iran has many dangerous surrogates in the region and a whole range of possible responses. Which responses do we expect? Which are the most likely? What do we know about what Iran would plan to do in retaliation, and what are our plans to counter all of these responses? How effective does our military, does our CIA, does our State Department think these responses will be?

The next question is, What does this action mean for the long-term stability for Iraq? What does it mean for our presence in Iraq? What does it mean to the trillions of dollars—trillions—and thousands of American lives sacrificed there? How does what we are doing now fit into that? How does the administration plan to manage any escalation of the hostilities? How does the administration plan to avoid a larger and potentially endless conflagration in the Middle East?

These are crucial questions. Not one has been answered by the President or anyone in the administration. All of

the tweeting and all of the bravado is no substitute for strategic thinking and long-term foreign policy goals and ways to achieve those goals. This administration seems to be devoid of that. It certainly was when it came to North Korea. It certainly was when it came to Syria. It certainly is when it comes to Russia, and it seems likely the same case is now occurring with Iran.

At a minimum, the questions I mentioned must be answered. This is an important moment for our Nation. The American people need clarity that the Trump administration has a plan—not just a tweet but a plan—to keep our troops, our Nation, and our people safe.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. President, as my colleagues return from the holiday recess, one question looms before us: Will the Senate conduct a fair impeachment trial of the President of the United States? Will we search for all of the facts, or will we look for a coverup—a sham trial—on one of the most important powers the Founding Fathers gave the American people?

The Framers gave the Senate the sole power to try Presidential impeachments because they could not imagine another body with “confidence enough” in its own status to “preserve the necessary impartiality.” It is up to every Senator now to live up to that awesome and profound responsibility.

At the moment, there is a very clear difference of opinion between the Republican leader and myself about what it means to have a fair trial. I believe a fair trial is one that considers all the relevant facts and allows relevant witnesses and documents—a feature of every single impeachment trial of a President in the history of our Nation. We have never had one with no witnesses—not once.

Leader MCCONNELL likes to cite precedent. That precedent stares him in the face, and he can’t answer it. My Republican counterpart believes that a trial should feature no relevant witnesses and none of the relevant documents. He has made clear in his public appearance on FOX News that it should proceed according to the desires of the White House—the defendant in this case. Glaringly, the Republican leader has yet to make one single argument why witnesses should not testify.

I am waiting to hear it, Leader MCCONNELL. Give us specific answers why these witnesses should not come forward. Don’t call names. Don’t finger-point. Don’t get angry at NANCY PELOSI. Tell us why, here in the Senate, witnesses and documents should not come forward that are directly relevant to the charges against the President of the United States of America.

Leader MCCONNELL has sort of exempted himself from fair debate. He doesn’t want a fair trial; he wants a quick and sham trial. Now it is up to every Senator. Every Senator will have a say in deciding which of the two views wins out. Will we have a fair

trial or a coverup? Will we hear the evidence, or will we try to hide it? It will not be me and not the Republican leader alone but a majority of Senators who will decide whether we have a fair trial with facts and evidence or a Senate-sponsored coverup of the President’s alleged misconduct.

Make no mistake—there will be votes on whether to call each of the four witnesses we proposed and subpoena the documents we have identified. Under the rules of the Senate trial, the minority will be able to offer motions subject to a majority vote.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle, your constituents and the voice of history are watching. You will be required to vote on whether we have a fair trial with witnesses and with documents, or you will say: I am running away from the facts. I am scared of the facts. I will go for a coverup.

A few hours ago, the momentum for uncovering the truth in a Senate trial gathered even more momentum. One of the key witnesses I have asked for, Mr. John Bolton, former National Security Advisor to President Trump, correctly acknowledged that he needs to comply with a Senate subpoena for his testimony, if issued. Previously, Mr. Bolton said he was leaving the question of his testimony up to the courts. Today, he made it perfectly clear that he will come if the Senate asks, as he should. The other potential witnesses we have identified—Mr. Mulvaney, Mr. Duffey, and Mr. Blair—should do the same.

We know that Mr. Bolton, like Mr. Mulvaney, Mr. Duffey, and Mr. Blair—the three other witnesses—has crucial, eyewitness knowledge of the President’s dealings with Ukraine, about how decisions were made to withhold security assistance and how opposition within the administration to that delay President Trump seemed to want was overcome.

A simple majority is all it takes to ensure that the Senate issues a subpoena for these witnesses. If only four Republicans decide that Mr. Bolton and the three other witnesses ought to be heard, they will be heard, because every Democrat will vote to hear them. It is now up to four Senate Republicans to support bringing in Mr. Bolton and the three other witnesses, as well as the key documents we have requested, to ensure that all the evidence is presented at the outset of the Senate trial.

Given that Mr. Bolton’s lawyers have stated he has new and relevant information to share, if any Senate Republican opposes issuing subpoenas to the four witnesses and documents we have requested, they would make it absolutely clear they are participating in a coverup on one of the most sacred duties we have in this Congress—in this Senate—and that is to keep a President in check.

Leader MCCONNELL has suggested we follow the 1999 example of beginning the impeachment trial first and then deciding on witnesses and documents