

the Speaker decides she is ready to stop playing games.

IRAN

Mr. President, on Friday, we learned that Iranian General Qasem Soleimani had been killed in a U.S. airstrike. Iran's terrorist activities throughout the Middle East are well known. Iran is a key backer of Hamas and Hezbollah and has fomented conflict throughout the entire Middle East—escalating sectarian conflict in Iraq, fueling civil war in Yemen, and supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's brutal regime.

At the end of December, the Iran-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah, or KH, as they are called, fired more than 30 rockets at an Iraqi military base, killing an American contractor and wounding 4 U.S. troops. Days later, Iran-backed protesters stormed the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, conducting a 2-day siege of the Embassy before withdrawing—although not without setting fire to parts of the Embassy's exterior.

The list of Iranian terror activities is long, and at the center of all these activities has been General Qasem Soleimani. As head of the Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, General Soleimani has been masterminding Iran's terrorist activities for two decades. Iran has been linked to one in six military deaths in Iraq, notably through the IEDs that have become so emblematic of the War on Terror. This was Soleimani's work. He is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans and thousands of innocent civilians throughout the Middle East. It is a good thing that his reign of terror is over.

While I hope we can all agree that Soleimani was a just target, there are naturally questions about the timing of the strike and what options were laid before President Trump. The Senate will be briefed tomorrow, and I hope my colleagues and I will be given a clear intelligence picture of the imminent and significant threat Secretary of State Pompeo and other administration officials have described.

Soleimani's death provides Iran with an opportunity to change course and to rethink its participation in terrorist activities throughout the Middle East and its aggression against the United States. Unfortunately, Iran doesn't seem ready to take that opportunity, and there are rightfully concerns about how Iran might retaliate for Soleimani's death.

Iran has vowed severe revenge, but I hope Iran's leaders recognize that the United States will not tolerate Iran's aggressions. The United States is obviously closely monitoring any Iranian response or escalation, from attempted cyber attacks to threats against U.S. troops or citizens or our allies. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Milley, has cautioned that there remains a significant risk, and we have seen the Department of Defense and the State Department adjust their postures accordingly.

As I said, with Soleimani's removal, Iran has the opportunity to change

course. In both Iran and Iraq, we have seen protests bravely displaying the desire for a new way forward and, in the case of Iraq, for freedom from Iran's malign influence. The path to that new day is a difficult one. Soleimani's decades of work building terrorist networks will not easily be undone, and his replacement has already been named and has vowed revenge.

In addition, under pressure from Iran, Iraq's Parliament advanced a nonbinding resolution calling for the removal of U.S. troops from Iraq. I hope that cooler heads will prevail in Iraq and that we can come to an agreement that upholds our mutual security interests and is beneficial to both the United States and to the people of Iraq. We have invested a lot in regional security efforts that we should see through. As we know all too well from the rise of ISIS, the consequences of leaving a power vacuum can be dire. I hope that power vacuum will not be resurrected as the United States suspends counter-ISIS operations in order to defend our installations.

The world may enjoy a degree of closure with the killing of Qasem Soleimani. Citizens of the Middle East who suffered at the hand of Soleimani's terror may have hope for a safer future, but this will require the Iranian regime to recognize the opportunity it now has to rid itself of Soleimani's agenda and chart a new course.

Iran's leadership knows full well the consequences of maintaining its vendetta against America, our allies, and those who seek to live in peace and freedom. It got a preview of our military and intelligence capabilities last week. This is not a call for escalation but a frank acknowledgment that the United States will stand resolutely against those who threaten American lives.

While the initial reaction from Iran has not been promising, I hope General Soleimani's death will encourage Iran to think carefully before it proceeds any further on its path of terror. I look forward to talking with the Defense Secretary, the CIA Director, and others tomorrow about what we need to do to minimize the threat of retaliation and to keep Americans and our allies safe.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF JOVITA CARRANZA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I am very happy that our first votes, not only of the session but of this decade, are going to be focused on supporting small businesses.

In America, we tend to speak about businesses with a sense of reverence that I think is absent in other coun-

tries, and there is good reason for that. So many of the great companies in this Nation started out as small businesses, and some of the greatest companies in America today are small businesses. We also have just under 60 million individuals who are employed by over 30 million small businesses throughout the country.

The Small Business Administration can play a very important role in our success and in the success of these businesses by providing entrepreneurs and firms with technical assistance and access to capital, so it is critically important for the country.

Today, as we consider the nomination of Jovita Carranza to serve as the SBA Administrator, I thought it was an important point to make. There are some additional points I would like to make.

First of all, the position of Administrator is really crucial to ensuring that the agency is functioning well and is successful. It is also important that the Administrator be someone who is open to and supportive of the need to modernize the Small Business Administration and its many programs.

As we move into this new decade, it is really important that the agency evolve to meet the unique and special needs of the entrepreneurs of today at a time in which we have ever-changing and increasing global and business climate adjustments that are occurring.

I think we sometimes forget that businesses today face a very different environment than we saw 10, 20, or 30 years ago. So as we are aware of these changes, it is important that, as policymakers, we have an obligation to identify the goals that achieve our national interests and that provide for our national defense, that create good jobs for American workers, and then that organize the laws that we propose and the reforms that we propose around those important items of national interest and how to achieve furthering them.

The last time the Small Business Administration was fully reauthorized was 20 years ago, in the year 2000, when just 42 percent of households, for example, had internet access. Nearly everyone was still using dial-up phones for access. It would be another 6 years before the iPhone even existed. Back in 2000, Americans bought fewer than 10,000 hybrid electric cars. From 2000 to 2020, those are the changes we have undergone, and that was the last time the SBA was reauthorized.

By the way, it also happens to be the year when China became a member of the World Trade Organization. I say that because, today, American small businesses—if you think our big businesses face unfair competition, imagine the unprecedented threat in competing against the Chinese Government and its Communist Party's systematic industrial espionage and coercion, its large-scale subsidies for their own industries, and its sweeping obstruction of market access to its own country.

The challenges are extraordinary, and they require resources that allow our small business sector to compete against these conditions and to operate dynamically, to grow, to be innovative, and to be creative.

Small businesses need access to services and programs that better position them to support not just our Nation's competitiveness on an international scale but particularly with regard to Beijing's continued economic aggression toward our Nation.

Just as the SBA was critical in building the technologies and helping to spur the creation of the technologies that allowed us to be successful both in the space race and, ultimately, in the Cold War, I believe the SBA can play an important role in our efforts to compete with Chinese economic hostility.

In that regard, it is important to note that the status quo is just not enough. We need an agency that incorporates new and creative programs, that focuses on spurring investment, supporting advanced manufacturing, promoting innovation, and expanding our export opportunities.

It is important to note, as I said earlier with regard to the SBA's role during the space race and the Cold War, that innovation breakthroughs we have often seen in our history have often been contingent on private-public collaboration, especially in the space program that also happens to have a commercial obligation and also furthers our national security.

Small businesses and startups have historically always been essential to developing the technologies and the commercialization of products that often come out of those partnerships. But unlike what we have seen in Silicon Valley—startups that venture capital firms tend to gravitate toward over there—these technologies—the ones that are in our national interests, which I just spoke about—require significant time and resources to finance.

So on the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, we are going to continue to work toward a comprehensive reauthorization of the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act to achieve these ends that I have just outlined. But the leadership and the guidance of a forward-thinking SBA Administrator is going to be essential, not just to get it passed but to make sure that modernization works.

As the chairman of the committee, I am very eager to see the position of Administrator be filled. President Trump nominated Ms. Carranza to serve in this critical role back in August of last year. She has a long and successful career, having spent many years in both the private sector and government service.

She started her service at UPS. After 29 years, she retired from there as vice president of air operations. Then she was nominated by President George W. Bush and was confirmed by this body—

the Senate—to serve as SBA's Deputy Administrator back in 2006. She served there for 2 years and then went back into the private sector until returning in June of 2017, when President Trump named her Treasurer of the United States.

Last month, the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee held a hearing to consider this nomination, and we voted favorably to report her nomination to the Senate floor.

In that hearing, Ms. Carranza made a commitment to work with Congress—to work with each of us—on the pressing issues that are facing the SBA and the program. She assured us—myself, ranking member, Senator CARDIN, and other members of the committee—that she would address the management challenges in the Office of Investment and Innovation to ensure the integrity of its programs but, most importantly, that she would appear before the committee after her confirmation to provide an update on how she is addressing these challenges.

She has committed to do other things that are important: to assess the far-reaching rule governing the agency's critical access to capital programs so that it is not restricting access to capital for small businesses; to be communicative and transparent with us on the subsidy models and calculations they are using for the Federal credit programs; to fill the backlog of staff that is needed to properly run the SBA's innovation programs; to ensure that Federal grant dollars are being properly used—the dollars especially associated with the entrepreneurial development programs to modernize the agency's disaster loan programs; and to establish better controls to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. She committed to expeditiously establish a women-owned small business certification program and to provide responses to Congress on several of our past communications to the agency outlining proposals to aid small businesses against cyber threats, which is a critical threat facing many of the small businesses in this country today.

In the business meeting we had after the hearing, we considered her nomination. I was pleased to see that the overwhelming majority of our members on both sides of the aisle, including the ranking member, supported sending the nomination to the full Senate because there is a lot of work to be done. Restoring and expanding the SBA's historic legacy of assisting businesses and meeting the international challenges at hand are very important and very crucial.

I look forward to working with Ms. Carranza to modernize our existing programs to meet the challenges we have before us and working toward solutions that ensure that small businesses have access to the resources they need to start, to grow, and to empower our Nation at large.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this nomination when we have a vote in a few minutes.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. RUBIO. 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 CARRANZA NOMINATION

Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

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

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), 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 88, nays 5, as follows:

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 2 Ex.]

##### YEAS—88

Baldwin	Gardner	Reed
Barrasso	Graham	Risch
Bennet	Grassley	Roberts
Blackburn	Hassan	Romney
Blumenthal	Hawley	Rosen
Blunt	Heinrich	Rounds
Boozman	Hirono	Rubio
Braun	Hoeven	Sasse
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Burr	Inhofe	Schumer
Cantwell	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Capito	Jones	Scott (SC)
Carper	Kaine	Shaheen
Casey	Kennedy	Shelby
Cassidy	King	Sinema
Collins	Lankford	Smith
Coons	Leahy	Stabenow
Cornyn	Lee	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Loeffler	Tester
Cotton	Manchin	Thune
Cramer	McConnell	Tillis
Crapo	McSally	Toomey
Cruz	Menendez	Udall
Daines	Moran	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Enzi	Murray	Wicker
Ernst	Paul	Young
Feinstein	Peters	
Fischer	Portman	

##### NAYS—5

Gillibrand	Markey	Wyden
Harris	Merkley	