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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Mighty God, You are the strength of our lives, our safe fortress, and our shelter from life's storms. During this season of a raging tempest, speak Your peace to our Senators. Remind them that You continue to rule Your universe through the unfolding of Your prevailing providence, and that Your truth continues to march on in our Nation and world.

Lord, prosper the works of the hands of our legislators as they strive to glorify You with their thoughts, words, and actions.

May faith replace fear, truth defeat falsehood, justice triumph over greed, and love prevail over hate.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

RUSSIA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, if reports are true that Russia has been paying a bounty to the Taliban to kill American soldiers, this is a very serious escalation of what Russia expert Edward Lucas dubbed "The New Cold War." Mr. Lucas said that back in 2008.

This sort of movement by Russia, if it is proven—and there are a lot who believe with Russia it is possible—it demands a strong response. And I don't mean a diplomatic response.

We have had previous things like this happen with Russia. President Bush tried playing nice with Russia, then talking tough when Putin showed his true nature.

President Obama repeated this cycle—you know the word—"resetting" relations, despite Russia having just occupied parts of our ally Georgia, and then switching gears when Russia invaded Ukraine.

Putin is a KGB guy who understands only strength. His popularity has taken a hit lately. It makes him very unpredictable. That may be why he is doing these things, even though Russia has a reputation for doing them all the time.

So we need to increase deterrence on NATO's eastern flank. We should also hit back where it hurts.

Dictators like Putin fear their own people—and, of course, for good reason. Putin and his cronies have enriched themselves at the expense of ordinary Russians.

This week Russia is having a referendum on waiving term limits, allowing Putin to stay in power when his term is up. Of course, Russia will probably be conducting a rigged election.

We should point out to the Russian people that they don't have to accept that.

I yield the floor.

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. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

PROTESTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I had planned to speak first today about the NDAA. I had planned to discuss our work to ensure American servicemembers can protect our Nation and secure peace for the United States.

Unfortunately, the inexplicable passivity and weakness of local leaders in our own country has denied some citizens peace and security right here at home.

Here we are in Congress, equipping our Armed Forces to protect the homeland. Yet some local leaders have apparently felt it would be too politically incorrect to do their jobs and keep the peace.

It has now been 22 days since radical demonstrators seized control of several blocks of downtown Seattle, drove the police out of a precinct, and declared an autonomous zone, which the mob itself would rule.

It is worth pausing to consider how the mainstream media and leading Democrats might have reacted if tea party protesters in 2009 had forcibly created a breakaway zone within a major city and barred the actual authorities from entering. Somehow I am skeptical the press would have bent over backward to find a sympathetic light. Somehow I doubt these same politicians would have felt compelled to curry favor with the occupiers or flirt with their demands.

But we are talking about the American left in 2020. So, instead, what we get is a major newspaper lavishing praise—praise—on the "liberated streets" and a mayor and local government that have expressly declined to restore order and the equal protection of the law.

The mob has gotten its way.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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There have been numerous shootings in this lawless place. About a week ago, a 19-year-old was shot and killed. Last weekend, after yet another shooting, a 16-year-old is dead and a 14-year-old was injured. Some reports suggest these two boys were shot by a self-appointed security squad. These are miscellaneous citizens who roam the area with guns drawn after the occupiers drove the real police out.

We are talking about Seattle, WA, in the United States of America?

The rule of law cannot fade in and out with the fashions of the radical left. No leaders should have sacrificed small businesses to riots and mobs a few weeks back, and no leader should let threats or leftwing jargon persuade them to tolerate occupations for weeks on end.

I understand that, just this morning, Seattle's mayor finally—finally—released a new order that at last empowered police to bring an end to this. So let's hope the rule of law finally—finally—prevails.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on an entirely different matter, the Senate has indeed turned to what will be the 60th annual National Defense Authorization Act. If you look at the world news, it would appear we have done so not a moment too soon.

After months of threats, President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party finally delivered the punch in the mouth to the city of Hong Kong that they are calling a "national security law." As I and others have warned for months, it tramples all over the freedoms and autonomy that have set Hong Kong apart.

Today marks the 23rd anniversary of Hong Kong's handover from the United Kingdom. Normally this anniversary would have occasioned peaceful demonstration. Instead, the new law has brought scores of arrests and boasts from local authorities about how many peaceful demonstrators they have jailed, new harsh penalties for Hongkongers for new and vague offenses, and new authority from Beijing to intervene at will.

It appears to directly—directly—violate China's international promises and effectively end the "one country, two systems" policy.

I have discussed at some length the specific consequences China will face for this. I will continue to discuss them in the future.

This same week, we received new confirmation that China's ethnic cleansing campaign against the Uighur people in Xinjiang includes forced abortions, forced birth control, and State-enforced sterilizations on a systematic scale.

All of this is in addition to the international provocation that China has only stepped up during this pandemic—which they helped worsen—against Taiwan, against India, against the Philippines, and so on.

China is not our only adversary occupying the spotlight. Recent days have intensified questions about Russia's negative role in the Middle East.

I have long warned that Russia and other adversaries will exploit any American passivity or retreat from this important region. Whether in Syria or Afghanistan, the question is whether we will stand our ground and exert our influence or allow Iran, Russia, and terrorists to literally push us out of the region.

Sadly, as the Senate turns to the NDAA, the need to continue making swift progress on our national defense strategy is staring us plain in the face. Fortunately, Chairman INHOFE, Ranking Member REED, and our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee have put forward a bill that rises to the challenge.

The bill establishes the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. It lays out a clear vision for making our Pacific joint force more adaptable and our commitments to regional partners more feasible, smarter basing for forward-deployed Americans, more supplies and equipment prepositioned.

It will encourage more streamlined technology so that, from weapons platforms to information security, America and its allies in China's backyard stand ready to counter aggression together.

This NDAA authorizes full funding for the European Deterrence Initiative, doubling down on our NATO alliances as we check the worst impulses of Putin's Russia. The bill will further limit the information Putin gets pertaining to missile defense, bring more focus on tracking Russian support for terrorist proxies and despotic regimes, and renew our commitment to have U.S. forces support, train, and keep watch alongside our partners.

But it isn't enough to check our adversaries today. We also need to outrun them toward the future. So this legislation will also support critical reserves to help us secure a decisive edge in everything from hypersonic weapons to 5G communications.

Threats to our Nation are pulling American servicemembers in all directions. Fortunately, this NDAA has all of their backs.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, while the Senate maintains the serious approach that builds bipartisan successes like the CARES Act and the Great American Outdoors Act, the House Democrats appear addicted to pointless political theater.

Well, our absentee neighbors have finally arrived back in the Capitol, and they have wasted no time resuming old tricks. The Speaker has chosen to spend the House's time this week on a multithousand-page cousin of the Green New Deal masquerading as a highway bill.

You don't have to take my word for it; the chair of the House Transpor-

tation and Infrastructure Committee said so. He said: "This is the application of the principles of the Green New Deal." And he is right, because here are the four pillars of the Green New Deal: No. 1, spend an insane amount of money; No. 2, check every far-left ideological box; No. 3, propose bad policies; and No. 4, forget about making law from the very beginning so you can legislate in a world of pure fantasy—pure fantasy. Check, check, check, and check.

This so-called infrastructure bill would siphon billions in funding from actual infrastructure to funnel into climate change policy. By putting a huge thumb on the scale for mass transit and electric vehicles, it revises the old Obama-Biden focus on disproportionately helping major metro areas, leaving less for the rest of our country. No wonder it came out of committee in the House on a purely bipartisan vote. No wonder the White House declared it not a serious proposal and made it clear this will never become law.

Naturally, this nonsense is not going anywhere in the Senate. It will just join the list of absurd House proposals that were only drawn up to show fealty to the radical left. Here in the Senate, we will keep at the serious work of our Nation.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 4049, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the following:

A bill (S. 4049) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Inhofe amendment No. 2301, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Portman) amendment No. 2080 (to amendment No. 2301), to require an element in annual reports on cyber science and technology activities on work with academic consortia on high priority cybersecurity research activities in Department of Defense capabilities.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.