

In recent years, the Chinese government has escalated its use of high-tech surveillance, restricted freedom of movement and erected mass internment facilities, which the government describes as vocational training centers and critics describe as concentration camps holding ethnic minorities, particularly Uighur Muslims. The government says the policy is necessary to combat terrorism. In September, the United States joined more than 30 countries in condemning “China’s horrific campaign of repression” against the Uighurs. Reports of separatist violence and Chinese government repression in Xinjiang go back decades.

Tatum said the NBA wasn’t aware of political tensions or human rights issues in Xinjiang when it announced it was launching the training academy there in 2016.

In the spring of 2018, the U.S. began considering sanctions against China over human rights concerns there, and the issue became the subject of increasing media coverage within the United States. In August 2018, Slate published an article under the headline: “Why is the NBA in Xinjiang? The league is running a training center in the middle of one of the world’s worst humanitarian atrocities.”

Later, the NBA would receive criticism from congressional leaders, but it never addressed the concerns or said anything about the status of the facility until last week.

Sometime shortly after Morey’s October tweet, the academy webpage was taken down.

Pressed by ESPN, Tatum repeatedly avoided questions on whether the widespread human rights abuses in Xinjiang played a role in closing the academy, instead citing “many factors.”

“My job, our job is not to take a position on every single human rights violation, and I’m not an expert in every human rights situation or violation,” Tatum said. “I’ll tell you what the NBA stands for: The values of the NBA are about respect, are about inclusion, are about diversity. That is what we stand for.”

Nury Turkel, a Uighur American activist who has been heavily involved in lobbying the U.S. government on Uighur rights, told ESPN before the NBA said it had left Xinjiang that he believed the league had been indirectly legitimizing “crimes against humanity.”

One former league employee who worked in China wondered how the NBA, which has been so progressive on issues around Black Lives Matter and moved the 2017 All-Star Game out of Charlotte, North Carolina, over a law requiring transgender people to use bathrooms corresponding to the sex listed on their birth certificates, could operate a training camp amid a Chinese government crackdown that also targeted NBA employees.

“You can’t have it both ways,” the former employee said. “. . . You can’t be over here in February promoting Black History Month and be over in China, where they’re in reeducation camps and all the people that you’re partnering with are hitting kids.”

Tatum said the NBA “has a long history and our values are about inclusion and respect and bridging cultural divides. That is what we stand for and that is who we are as an organization. We do think that engagement is the best way to bridge cultural divides, the best way to grow the game across borders.”

The repression in Xinjiang is aimed primarily at Uighurs, but foreigners also have been harassed. One American coach said he was stopped by police three times in 10 months. Once, he was taken to a station and held for more than two hours because he didn’t have his passport at the time. Because

of the security restrictions, foreigners were told they were not allowed to rent housing in Xinjiang; most lived at local hotels.

Tatum said the league wasn’t aware any of its employees had been detained or harassed in Xinjiang.

Most of the players who trained at the NBA’s Xinjiang academy were Uighurs, but it was unclear to league employees who spoke with ESPN if any were impacted by the government crackdown.

After returning from Xinjiang last fall, Corbin Loubert, a strength coach who joined the NBA after stints at the IMG Academy in Florida and The Citadel, posted a CNN story on Twitter describing how the network’s reporters faced surveillance and intimidation in Xinjiang.

“I spent the past year living in Xinjiang, and can confirm every word of this piece is true,” Loubert tweeted. “One of the biggest challenges was not only the discrimination and harassment I faced,” he added, “but turning a blind eye to the discrimination and harassment that the Uyghur people around me faced.”

Loubert declined several interview requests from ESPN.

In a bipartisan letter to Silver last October after Morey’s tweet, eight U.S. legislators—including Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., and Cruz—called for the NBA to “re-evaluate” the Xinjiang academy in response to “a massive, government-run campaign of ethno-religious repression.”

Even though the NBA now says it had left Xinjiang in the spring of 2019, the league did not respond to the letter. The Xinjiang academy webpage disappeared soon after.

Last week, in response to Sen. Blackburn of Tennessee, the league wrote, “The NBA has had no involvement with the Xinjiang basketball academy for more than a year, and the relationship has been terminated.”

John Pomfret, whose 2016 book, “The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom” covers the history of the U.S.-China relationship, called the decision to put an academy in Xinjiang “a huge mistake” that made the NBA “party to a massive human rights violation.”

“Shutting it down was probably the smartest thing to do,” he said. “But you can clearly understand from the NBA’s point of view why they wouldn’t want to make an announcement: Then you’re just rubbing China’s nose in it. What would you say, ‘We’re leaving because of human rights concerns?’ That’s worse than Morey’s tweet.”

Tatum said the league decided to end its involvement with the Xinjiang facility because it “didn’t have the authority, or the ability to take direct action against any of these local coaches, and we ultimately concluded that the program there was unsalvageable.”

Tatum said the NBA informed its coaches in Xinjiang that the league planned to cease operations, and coaches were then “moved out.” But when Tatum was told that multiple sources had told ESPN that the NBA never informed the coaches of its plans to close Xinjiang, Tatum said he wasn’t actually sure what conversations had taken place.

Two sources disputed that the NBA had any plans to leave Xinjiang in the spring of 2019. One coach said the league was still seeking other coaches to move there well into the summer and that the league’s statement to Blackburn was “completely inaccurate.”

“They were still trying to get people to go out there,” the coach said. “It didn’t end because [Tatum] said, ‘We’re gonna end this.’”

“They probably finally said, ‘Why are we doing this?’” he continued. “Like we told them from the start, ‘Why do we need to be

here? We’re the NBA, there’s no reasons for us to be here.”

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam 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 MARK WESLEY MENEZES

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have come to the floor this afternoon to encourage Senators to support the nomination that is now pending before us. This is for Mark Menezes to be the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Energy.

I have had plenty of opportunity to be working with Mr. Menezes, as he has been with the Department of Energy for quite some time.

He originally hails from Louisiana. He earned his undergraduate and law degrees at Louisiana State University. He has, as I mentioned, considerable experience in the energy sector and here on Capitol Hill. He previously served as chief counsel for energy and environment on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. So he has been around for a fair period of time.

But more recently, for the past 3 years now, Mr. Menezes has served as the Department’s Under Secretary of Energy, and in that role, he has been responsible for many programs that help drive the innovation within the Department, including for renewable energy, as well as nuclear energy.

Mr. Menezes also helped create the Department’s cybersecurity office, which is dedicated to protecting our energy infrastructure from what has become very sophisticated and near-constant threats.

As Members may recall, the Senate confirmed Mr. Menezes to his current role by voice vote. I believe he has excelled as the Under Secretary of Energy. He has helped to set the policy direction of the Department. He has worked with many of us on issues that are important to our States and to the country as a whole.

I am also confident that Mr. Menezes will be a great second-in-command for Secretary Brouillette. We held Mr. Menezes’s nomination hearing back on May 20. This was our first hearing that we had held after several months lost due to the pandemic.

Mr. Menezes did, not surprisingly, very, very well. He demonstrated his knowledge of the issues; he showed us that he understands what it takes to help lead the Department; and that enabled us to report his nomination to the full Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support.

So we are sitting here now—it has been nearly a 2-month delay—and I am very pleased that we are about to vote on Mr. Menezes’s nomination. It is really key. It is very important that

Secretary Brouillette has his leadership team in place, and Mr. Menezes has demonstrated that he has the knowledge and the experience needed to succeed as Deputy Secretary.

So I appreciate, and I have shared this with Mr. Menezes, his willingness to serve our country in a new and a higher capacity, particularly as we seek to harness the Department's capabilities to overcome and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I thank the majority leader for bringing up his nomination. I would urge every Member to vote in favor of it on cloture today and on confirmation tomorrow.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, before I yield the floor to my friend and colleague, the ranking member on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I want to take just a very, very, very brief moment and urge us, at this moment, on the 3rd of August, as we are commencing this workweek here, where the expectation from people from Alaska to West Virginia and all points in between is that this Congress is going to come together to be responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable in this country right now—the vulnerability that has come about because of a global health pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis that we see now.

I spent the weekend back home in Alaska. I heard the concerns and the fears of so many for whom things are not getting better. Things are looking worse, and it is bleak. As of today, in the State's largest city, the mayor has recognized that with the numbers increasing as they are, we need to go back to the hunker-down mode. So restaurants and bars are shutting down again—just after they thought, with some level of optimism, they would be able to bring folks back into work, they would be able to fill up the freezers and get the produce and get the great salmon that is coming in off the streams and serve up some great meals. That is not happening.

So that economic picture in our largest community is bleaker and bleaker. And for those who wake up and know that today is the day that they have to pay the mortgage, they have to pay the rent, and they don't know what level of assistance is going to be coming from their Congress—they do know, though, that the unemployment benefits that they had received, the plussed-up amount, that that is not on the horizon for them.

They do know that school is opening up in 20 days, and there is uncertainty with how the schools are going to safely open up for the children and for the faculty, the teachers, the janitors, how they are going to make that work. And, oh, by the way, if this is a schedule where the kids are only in class for a couple days a week, for a shorter time period, how do I deal with the struggles and the challenges of childcare?

The folks at the food bank whom I met with over the weekend who are so

concerned about the food security issues, for them, recognizing that a plus-up in SNAP may be—may be what gets that family through from week to week.

This is not the time for us to figure out what every one of us wants because this is the must-pass bill in this Congress. It is a must-pass bill. But we have to recognize that this can't be about what we need, what I might need for my election, or what I might want to advance as a legacy piece. This needs to be about those for whom the anxiety and the—just the awful place they are in right now; that they know we have been responsive to them; that we are addressing the immediacy of now.

So whether it is what we do with unemployment insurance, whether it is what we do with food security, childcare, a longer term PPP program that will help our businesses, the short-term assistances—but understanding what it means for the longer term—the delay here only hurts the most vulnerable.

So I am urging all of us, let's come together, let's work with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, let's work with our colleagues over in the House, because people in my State are hurting, and they are expecting us to respond.

With that, I know that Senator MANCHIN wished to speak to the nomination of Mr. Menezes. I appreciate his good work on the committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous to be able to complete my remarks.

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

NOMINATION OF MARK WESLEY MENEZES

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Mark Menezes nomination to be Deputy Secretary of Energy.

I agree wholeheartedly with our chairwoman for Energy and Natural Resources. We have a great working relationship, and we have a good friendship that means more than anything to me.

But, basically, every now and then you get a person who comes before you that you know they are there for the good of the public. They are truly public servants, not for private service.

So this person comes across with so much expertise. That is going to play an important role in our national defense and our energy and economic security and our science and research and even in fighting the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and helping to rebuild our economy.

The Deputy Secretary plays a central role in all of these efforts, and I believe that Mr. Menezes is up to the task.

The Deputy Secretary is the second highest ranking officer in the Department of Energy and the Department's chief operating officer on top of that. He is responsible for managing the De-

partment's wide-ranging mission and a budget of over \$35 billion dollars—\$35-billion-dollar budget.

The DOE and its labs can also play a vital role in supporting the scientific research and development needed to rebuild our economy.

In addition, the Department is responsible for maintaining the Nation's nuclear weapons stockpile, overseeing the four power marketing administrations, and ensuring our energy security and protecting the Nation's energy sector from cyber attacks, among other things.

As the Department's second highest ranking officer and its chief operating office, the Deputy Secretary necessarily plays a critical role in all of these important functions.

Mr. Menezes brings an impressive background to the job. Thirty years ago, he was counsel to our former colleague Senator John Breaux; 15 years ago, he was chief counsel to the House Energy and Commerce and played a major role in shaping the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

He has held senior posts at the American Electric Power Company, the Hunton and Williams law firm, and Berkshire Hathaway Energy.

Most importantly, though, for the past 3 years, he has served as the Under Secretary of Energy. As the Under Secretary of Energy, Mr. Menezes has shown he is up to the task and capable of handling the job of Deputy Secretary.

I think that he truly, clearly, demonstrated his knowledge and his firm grasp of the wide range of important issues before the Department during the confirmation hearing, and I am happy to support his nomination in the most bipartisan way.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, I would also like to make a few comments on what my good friend Senator MURKOWSKI from Alaska said.

People are depending on us. This is not time to have political battles. People are hurting in West Virginia; they are hurting in Arkansas; they are hurting all over. The uncertainty hurts them more than anything else. We have to make sure that we understand this is a health crisis.

A health crisis needs to have its attention. We can't be closing hospitals in the middle of a health crisis. I have three rural hospitals that closed. We have to make sure that they stay open to fight the fight. Also, I am certain of one point. Unemployment is not going to come back full force until people know they have a vaccine or an antibody that will protect them from a fatal disease. They are concerned and worried about that.

With that being said, right now they are asking us to continue on for the next 5 months. We don't have connectivity. You talk about telework, distance learning, telehealth. They can't have any of this if they can't connect. So we have to make sure that one