

United States must be clear-headed and sure-footed about what comes next. The American people do not want a war with Iran, and the President does not have the authority to wage one.

Yesterday, we learned that the President had ordered the deployment of at least as many as 4,500 soldiers to the region—potentially more. Beyond Iraq, the U.S. military now has more than 70,000 troops in the Middle East, from Kuwait to Qatar, to Afghanistan, to the UAE, to Saudi Arabia, to Jordan, Oman, and Bahrain.

The President has promised to get the United States out of these forever wars in the Middle East, but the arrow is headed in the wrong direction.

Mr. President, how many more is it going to be? How long will they remain abroad? What is their objective? How will we assure their safety? Will more be deployed in the weeks and months ahead?

These are urgent questions. The administration must answer them. But so far, there has been a profound lack of information provided to Congress from the Department of Defense concerning what the Department is doing in response to Iran.

So I join Senators REED and DURBIN in requesting regular briefings and documents from the administration detailing the number of troops the President has deployed and plans to deploy in support of contingency plans with respect to Iran. We need to know if the administration is committing additional troops to the region and for how long.

Our letter urges the administration to clarify to the American people and our military that international law prohibits the deliberate targeting of cultural sites and that such an order would be unlawful and should not be followed.

The American people, rightfully, have serious concerns about a war with Iran and whether we are safer today because of this President's foreign policy, which is so often impulsive and erratic. I am afraid these impulsive and erratic actions throughout the world are making us less safe.

#### IMPEACHMENT

Mr. President, now, on impeachment, yesterday, Leader MCCONNELL announced that he has the votes to pass a partisan resolution to set the rules for the impeachment trial of President Trump. It was another unfortunate confirmation that Leader MCCONNELL has no intention of working with the minority to establish rules of a fair and honest trial that examines the evidence, hears from witnesses, and receives the relevant documents.

I have asked Leader MCCONNELL repeatedly to sit down and negotiate a plan where we would have witnesses and documents, and he has refused. Instead, Leader MCCONNELL, by his own admission, took his cues from the White House when it came to setting the parameters of a trial. Rather than engaging in any serious negotiation

with the Senate minority, he only spent time trying to convince his caucus that we should punt the questions of witnesses and documents to a later date.

I have explained why this proposal makes very little sense from the perspective of having a fair trial. The evidence should inform arguments in a trial. Evidence should not be an afterthought. Why would it make sense for both sides to present their entire case and then decide whether the Senate should request the evidence that we already know is out there?

It is extremely telling that Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans are not willing to take a forthright position on whether we should call witnesses and request documents. They can only say that the issue should be addressed later. Their only refuge—not much of one—is to kick the can down the road. No one—no one—has advanced an argument as to why the four eyewitnesses we have proposed should not testify. No one has advanced an argument as to why the three specific sets of documents related to the charges against the President should not be provided. Republicans can only get behind kicking the can down the road because they know we have the full weight of the argument on our side. There is virtually no argument why we shouldn't have witnesses and why we shouldn't have documents.

I want to make one thing very clear: There will be votes—repeated votes—on the question of witnesses and documents at the trial. The initial votes will not be the last votes on the matter. Republicans can delay it, but they cannot avoid it. And when those votes come up, Senate Republicans—not Leader MCCONNELL, who has already cast his lot completely with the defendant, the President—will have two crucial things to worry about.

First, if the Senate runs a sham trial without witnesses, without documents, and without all of facts, then the President's acquittal at the end of the trial will be meaningless. A trial without all the facts is a farce. The verdicts of kangaroo courts are empty.

Leader MCCONNELL is fond of claiming that the House ran the “most rushed, least thorough, and most unfair impeachment inquiry in modern history.” I know that is his talking point, but, in truth, Leader MCCONNELL is plotting to run the most rushed, least thorough, and most unfair impeachment trial in modern history. If the Senate rushes through the President's impeachment, if we actually fail to try the case, as the Constitution demands, then the true acquittal the President craves will be unobtainable.

The American people will see right through a partisan trial and understand that a rush to judgment renders that moot. They will understand that, when you don't want witnesses and documents, you are afraid of the truth and that you are covering something up, and that the likelihood is strong

that you did something very wrong. That is common sense. That is what all the polling data shows most Americans believe.

Second, when the Senate has votes on witnesses and documents, my Republican colleagues will have to answer to not just the President. The American people do not want a coverup. Whatever their view of the President, the American people want the Senate to have a fair trial. All the data shows that, with two more polls in the last few days. Every Senator will be under massive public pressure to support a fair trial that examines all the facts.

The American people understand the gravity of the charges against the President. The House has impeached the President for using the powers of his public office to benefit himself. The President was impeached because the House believes he tried to shake down a foreign leader into investigating his political opponent, pressuring a foreign power to interfere in our elections. He was impeached because he undertook an unprecedented campaign of obstruction to prevent Congress from investigating his wrongdoing.

The Articles of Impeachment suggest the President committed a grave injury to our democracy. The conduct they describe is exactly what the Founders most feared when they forged the impeachment powers of Congress.

If the Senate fails to hold a fair hearing of those charges, if one party—the President's party—decides to rush through a trial without hearing all the facts, witnesses, and documents, it will not just be the verdict of history that falls heavy on their shoulders. The American people, in the here and now, will pass a harsh judgment on Senators who participate in a coverup for the President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

#### IRAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last night Iran fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles at two military bases in Iraq where American troops were based. It was a brazen escalation with dangerous implications for the United States and the world.

We are fortunate. As of today, at this moment, none of our personnel have been reported to have been harmed, but the outrageous act was a clear and unsurprising retaliation to President Trump's killing of Iranian General Soleimani.

Our first order of business must be the safety of our military and civilian personnel in Iraq and the region, and I call on the Trump administration to make that the highest priority. Another immediate requirement is that the Congress step up and play one of the most important and long-neglected constitutional roles that we can envision. Article I, section 8, of the U.S. Constitution is clear in stating that the power to declare war is an explicit authority and power of Congress, as it

should be. One should never send our sons and daughters into conflict without the knowledge and consent of the American people. Our Founding Fathers were wise in making sure that this awesome power did not rest with a King-like leader but with the people's elected representatives. I have made this same argument regardless of whether the occupant of the White House was a Democrat or a Republican.

Some have had the audacity to argue that the 2001 authorization for the use of military force approved by this Congress to respond to the September 11, 2001, attacks or the 2002 AUMF, the war with Iraq, apply to the situation today in Iran. That is clearly wrong.

Let me be clear. I cannot imagine that anyone—anyone—who took either of those votes nearly 20 years ago—and I was here at that time—thought that they were approving a war with Iran two decades later. I certainly didn't.

This Congress should not be a troubling rubberstamp for President Trump's worst instincts by marching into another war in the Middle East. Simply, it is time for Members of this important body to show some courage and do their constitutional jobs. If you want a war with Iran, step up and face your constituents and record your vote accordingly.

The War Powers Resolution I filed last week, with the leadership of Senator TIM Kaine of Virginia, will be a first step regarding Congress's role in any conflict with Iran but not a last step. Ultimately, this President cannot start a war with Iran without the approval, under the Constitution, of Congress, and the Republican leadership should not roll over and play the role of lapdog when it comes to such a serious, life-and-death matter.

Tragically, this escalation with Iran—and the heightened risk to our personnel and security interests—was entirely predictable, except, it appears, to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo. The question was never the simplistic canard over whether killing Soleimani, a genuinely loathsome terrorist actor, was warranted or not, but, clearly, whether taking him off the face of the Earth was in the best interest of the United States.

Would such an act really advance the cause and interest and policies of our country or precipitate another war in the Middle East? The answer is increasingly upon us, and we here must debate this crisis before President Trump drags us even closer to this precipice.

Mr. President, sadly, President Trump's erratic and incoherent policies toward Iran have greatly contributed to the current crisis.

Before taking office, Iran's nuclear weapons program was halted in a historic agreement President Obama negotiated in cooperation with our European allies, China, and Russia.

Iran continued its malign behaviors in the region, but containing them was much easier without the threat of a nuclear bomb.

President Trump petulantly withdrew from the nuclear agreement and tried to starve Iran of benefits it was to receive from that deal.

He pursued an incomprehensible erratic policy of regime change by trying to flatter and meet with Iranian President Rouhani to negotiate a supposedly better deal . . . threatening Iran militarily . . . and tightening sanctions.

Those efforts were going nowhere. Iran was lashing out at American interests, we were alienated from our key allies, and Iran inched closer to re-starting its nuclear program.

And in just the last week alone, President Trump's impulsive actions managed to reverse the recent Iraqi protest sentiment that wanted Iran to stop meddling in its politics, leading instead to a vote this weekend in the Iraqi parliament to expel all U.S. forces.

Similarly, after months of anti-government protests in Iran, he almost instantaneously united Iranian public opinion in hostility toward the U.S.

Iran now announced it is restarting its nuclear program and our interests around the region are on high alert and are at risk from further Iranian attack for considerable time to come.

Tragically, all President Trump has to show for his foolish, quote, "maximum pressure" campaign is an enflamed region, attacks on our personnel, the U.S. military potentially being evicted from Iraq, greater U.S. troop deployments to the Middle East, and an America less safe and on the brink of war.

Most certainly not "all is well."

Have we learned nothing from the thousands of lost lives and injuries and trillions of dollars spent on the war in Iraq—a war sold to this country on false pretenses?

Are we going to be led to yet such another fiasco by some of the same voices around President Trump who have yet to account for their failures in their disastrous war in Iraq?

Will my Republican colleagues finally show some backbone to an unchecked, uninformed, and untrusted President about to bumble into another war in the Middle East?

For the sakes of the sons and daughters who would be sent to any war with Iran, I certainly hope so.

I see that my colleague from Illinois is here and has asked for permission to speak on the floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL GEORGE DESOMBRE

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I am here to speak on two matters.

The first is the nomination for Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand of Michael DeSombre. The Kingdom of Thailand has been a longtime U.S. ally and is a key partner for our efforts in the Southeast Asia region, both economically and militarily.

Unfortunately, this nominee has failed to reach out to either me or my

colleague and my senior Senator, DICK DURBIN, both of whom are his home-State Senators. He has not reached out to me. So I am asking my colleagues to please vote no on cloture on Michael DeSombre to be our Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand until such time as I am able to have a chance to sit down with him.

IRAN

Mr. President, now I would like to speak on the attacks from Iran.

"All is well." That is what Donald Trump said just hours after a dozen missiles were fired at two U.S. military bases last night. That is what he said as thousands of troops are readying to deploy to the Middle East, to a hotbed of anger, where wearing an American flag on your shoulder gets more dangerous by the day. That is what he said as his own Nation careens toward a reckless and unauthorized war of his own making, born out of his illiteracy in matters ranging from foreign policy to common sense.

Donald Trump never deigned to put on the uniform of this great Nation, using his father's money to buy his way out of military service when his country needed him in Vietnam.

Let me make something clear to Donald Trump. All is certainly not well when war is on the horizon, just because you want to look like the toughest kid on the playground. I am incredibly thankful that no Americans were killed last night in Iran's rebuttal attack, but some missed missiles should be no cause for celebration for the President. Just because there weren't fatalities yesterday doesn't mean there will not be any tragedies tomorrow.

We got into this situation because of Trump's glibness, because he liked the feeling of thumping his chest and the roar it got from FOX News, because he was so enamored by maximum pressure that he laughed at the idea of even minimum diplomacy. Now America is less safe as a result. So, no, Mr. President, all is certainly not well.

Sadly, Trump's glibness is shocking but not surprising. Last weekend, he was at his golf course in Florida, while more and more American troops were packing their rucks and getting ready to deploy 7,000 miles east. He was tweeting from Mar-a-Lago while the Iraqi Parliament was voting to expel U.S. servicemembers from their nation. He was rubbing shoulders with fellow millionaires from the comfort of his ritzy country club while the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS was announcing that we no longer have the resources to fight ISIS in Iraq and that, instead, we have to hunker down and focus on protecting our troops from the acts of revenge that Iran has promised are on the way.

A potential global conflict is veering closer by the hour, and it is because of Donald Trump. It is because of his impetuosity and his ignorance. It is because, once again, he has been manipulated by a hostile regime into decisions that further their goals while endangering the security of the Nation